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August
1954

SCIENCE FICTION Quarterly

Volume
3
Number
2

Feature Novels

POLAR PUNCH

by Boyd Ellanby 8

Sam Baracol couldn't quite get the formula for this new liquor he expected to produce; his niece, Mara, was more than willing to help — but what business had a woman in a chemical laboratory?



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THE WATCHERS Raymond E. Banks 53

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ROBERT W. LOWNDES, Editor

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A Department of Letters and Comment

As I Was Saying...

SOMEONE wrote in not too long ago, asking why I didn't try reviving the good old cover contests, which used to appear in such magazines as the original *Amazing Stories*, *Science Wonder Stories*, *Air Wonder Stories*, and so on. For those of you who came in much later, the gimmick was this: the cover artist would paint as fantastic a scene as he could imagine within the realm of what spelled strictly "science fiction" rather than the weird or fantasy type of imaginative illustration—usually throwing in a number of elements which seemed mutually exclusive. The publisher then announced that prizes would be paid for the best stories written around the cover, and prize-winners had their stories published, of course.

In addition to being a circulation stunt (and an entirely unobjectionable one, I might add) the cover-contests

were designed to attract new writers; several "regulars" of past periods first appeared as winners of such contests—for example, Cyril G. Wates, Cecil B. White, Charles R. Tanner, and P. Schuyler Miller. (Miller, it turned out later, already had his first story out at *Amazing Stories*, before writing "The Red Plague", which copped the *Air Wonder Stories* cover-contest top award; but "Through the Vibrations", his earlier story, didn't appear in print until nearly a year later.)

There are two flaws in the idea. First, despite the differences in approach, style, etc., all the stories are going to have a family resemblance—and while each one may be quite good on its own merits, readers are likely to get somewhat tired of the whole thing before the winners' appearances run out. Second, there's always the possi-

[Turn To Page 65]

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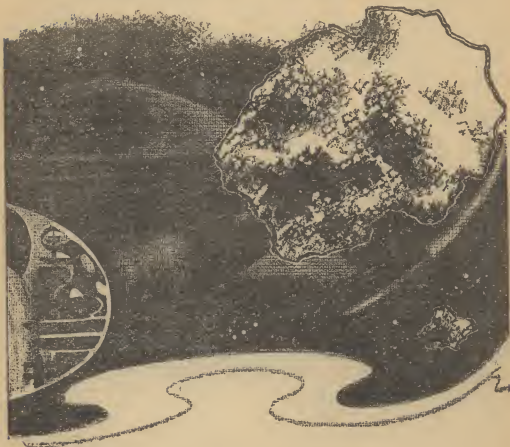
Address

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Sam Baracol relished the thrill of gambling his life on his skill at dodging meteorites . . .

Sam Baracol was fond of his niece, Mara, but women had to stay in their place in this world — and their place most certainly was not in a chemical laboratory, helping a man discover the formula for an elixir of sheer delight!



POLAR PUNCH

NOVELET OF WORLDS TO COME

by Boyd Ellanby

(illustrated by Frank Kelly Freas)

FELIX SAID, "Eight o'clock," and held out the crimson velvet evening cape.

"Take it away!" said Sam Baracol. "Don't you see I'm still working? Don't you think I'm capable of putting on my

own clothes? Can't a man have any peace?"

Silently the robot turned, laid the cape over a chair, and stepped back, waiting.

"Machines!" muttered Sam. He picked up the long-nosed flask, half-filled with a greenish black fluid, juggled it speculatively, then moved away from the cluttered laboratory table to stare morosely at the open cupboard before him. The shelves were filled with fifty green bottles, shaped like hairy comets. From the sides of the flattened comet heads, a legend glowed like rubies in the sun: *Baracol's Bitters*, and the pouring spouts were formed by the upward swirling tails. The bottles had been sitting there, waiting, for— Sam hated to admit to himself how many weeks; and they were still empty.

Sighing, he activated the barrier to close the cupboard; with the flask still cradled in his hand, he crossed to the other side of his sitting room and sank into his easy chair, reaching abstractedly for the glass held out to him by the roboval. Deftly Sam inverted the flask over the bubbling drink, twice. Then, setting glass and flask on the table beside him, he drew towards him a worn notebook. Opening it to a fresh page, he wrote in his sprawling calligraphy: "23-8-2120. 8:00 eve. *Two dashes B. B. 107*"

Picking up his drink, he tasted it, apprehensively, then relaxed. It tasted no different from usual, he was convinced; he would defy anybody to distinguish it from a common, ordinary gin-and-tag-i—in other words, an excellent Polar Punch.

Smiling, he tilted the glass to his lips and waited eagerly for the brew to take effect, to push down the worries that nagged at the fringes of his mind, and to dull the uneasiness that always attacked him after a spell of civilized living. Sam had spent his early youth in piloting spacecraft among the planets—solid, honest, man's work; he had

relished the thrill of gambling his life on his skill at dodging meteorites, and he had seen planets in far corners of the galaxy. Some had astonished him, some had pleased him, and none had bored him; but there was only one place he particularly wanted to see again—Aereopagis III—and the one place he dared not revisit.

Sam was ashamed to admit it even to himself, and he certainly did not intend to lay himself open to ridicule by admitting it to his friends; but the fact was, he was homesick—homesick for a primitive, old-fashioned, unprogressive world he had visited only a few times, in the way of business. Aereopagis III had stood still for more than two centuries while the rest of the galaxy evolved around it, but backward though the place was, he wanted to go there—and he had cut himself off from the right to return by his own cleverness.

"A quarter past eight o'clock," said the robot.

"Do I need a machine to remind me that I'm late?" said Sam. "That's what's wrong with the modern world—machines. A man can't dress himself; a man can't peel his orange in the morning; a man can't even be his own conscience, any more! Go away, Felix, and stop bothering me."

If he had his life to live over again, he reflected, there were just two things he would alter: he would refuse to accept the responsibility of being guardian to an orphaned female—namely, his niece, Mara—and he would take a less casual attitude towards the payment of income taxes on planets where he had chanced to make a profit. If he had only shown common, ordinary sense in these two matters, he wouldn't be mouldering away this endless winter in what amounted to exile, here in Marsport.

A PLEASANT warm tingle was creeping along his muscles, but Sam was still uneasy. His niece, Mara,

had gone on ahead more than an hour ago, with his promise to follow immediately. He hoped that, by the time he arrived, she would have got over her sulks, and not be in a mood to make pointed remarks about the irresponsibility of elderly bachelors. Her humor was often barbed, since her engagement to John. And although Sam, in the days of his "Buccaneer" youth would have shrugged at a girl's sulkiness, Sam in his middle age—his paunch rounder than ever, his head now covered with only a remnant of brown fuzz—had come to dread the sharp stab of women's words.

As a sensible man, he often reminded himself that women were only second-class citizens whose whims shouldn't be allowed to ruffle any man's calm; but as a realist he had to admit with some degree of shame that they were unaccountably troublesome creatures. Sometimes in this long winter of forced retirement in Marsport, he meditated on the paradox of women. It was a puzzle that in the anarchic culture of Earth, women had been considered to be the equals of men, yet they had seemed to fit into the social order pretty well, without causing too much disturbance; while here on Mars, although social science had achieved complete understanding of their proper subordinate place in Nature, women were still, amazingly, a frequent source of trouble—like Mara.

The roboval stepped forward.

"If I ever get away from this place of horrors," shouted Sam, "I swear I won't have a single electronic device in my house—and I'll have a house, too, not an apartment in a beehive! I'll light the place with candles; I'll get my drinking water from a well with my old tin dipper, and I'll even throw away my ignitor and make fire by twirling a stick and feeding it shredded bark! What do you want now?"

"Message coming in, sir. The new shipment of *Agaricus phosphorens*

from Aldeberan IV has come into the port by today's rocket."

"Three weeks late. Well, have it put in the conveyor-tube, and get it unpacked as soon as it gets here."

Felix did not move. The flat voice continued. "The conveyor is not permitted to release the case until after payment has been deposited. The recorder also wishes to remind you that you have apparently overlooked payment for the order of luciferin last month, and the khagaz the month before."

Sam flushed. "I'll go down to the port myself, and I'll tell them—" He broke off, shaking his head. "No good; I keep forgetting I live in a progressive world. Send the stuff by man, and I could at least try to argue with the fellow. Send it by conveyor, and I'm helpless. No scope for human personality, any more. How much does it want?"

"Two thousand credits, sir."

Drawing his checkbook from the drawer of his table, Sam furtively inspected his balance. Calmly he made out a check, signed it, and handed it to Felix—but not until the robot had turned and glided away did Sam complete filling in the stub.

THERE remained to him now exactly thirteen credits—a miserable thirteen credits with which to perfect Baracol's Bitters, the most stupendous creative discovery of modern times.

For in these bleak months of frustration, Sam had amused himself by taking up again one of the many hobbies of his school days, the study of physiological chemistry. During his years of roaming the galaxy, his curiosity had led him to collect drugs from many an alien pharmacopeia; he had been fascinated by their varying effects on the physiology of the various human species. He had experimented with the mutually-antagonistic effects of the vaso-constrictors—which close down the arterioles, to make the skin cold, clammy, and crawly—and the vaso-di-

lators—which produced a hot, uncomfortable flush, like the effects of nicotinic acid. And although he had begun the study simply as a way of marking time, Sam had continued with greater intensity when he realized, one day, that it might result in helping him to escape. If he could manage to achieve a perfect balance between the several antagonistic principles—if he could perfect Baracol's Bitters—he could command the wealth of the galaxy.

And he had thirteen credits remaining.

Slamming the checkbook back into the drawer, Sam stood up abruptly. He felt his pulse, then with acute concentration he began the routine check of his reactions.

Eyes? He glanced round his little sittingroom, at the cluttered laboratory which filled one end of the room, and the rhythmically pulsating flames of the similogs in the wall niche at the other end. The room looked snug and attractive as usual, filled with mementoes he had collected from a hundred planets. The prayer stones from Shaitan VII were still yellow, and their shape properly ovoid. The old tin dipper from Aereopagis III had its familiar battered appearance. Eyes, then, normal.

Ears? All right. The crackle of burning logs, built in to sound whenever the similogs were activated, sounded just as it ought to—no ghastly, head-splitting supersonic whine mixed in with the recording. Taste, touch balance—all were reassuringly normal.

His worries were fast receding to the back of his mind, and he felt a rising sense of triumph.

"This is it" said Sam, motioning imperiously to the roboval. "Don't just keep standing there, Felix; don't you see my glass is empty?"

"Half past eight o'clock," said Felix, holding out the cape once more.

"I'm constitutionally opposed—" said Sam, then stopped. Mara's fiance was always annoyed at guests who were

late, he remembered, and in the present state of his finances he did not care to have John annoyed. Besides, Sam now felt so confident, so pleased at being alive, that not even the prospect of a prefabricated dinner could depress him. What in the world had he been worrying about? he wondered.

Delinquent taxes? Nonsense. A few thousand credits would take care of that. Mara's stubbornness? Nonsense. A man had only to be firm.

Jauntily he squared his shoulders and allowed the crimson cape to settle round his ample body. He started towards the wall panel, then turned back. After a rapid re-check of his reactions, he made a last entry in his notebook: "*8:30 eve. Nothing. Eureka!*"

He closed the cover with a flourish, and waltzed out of the room.

OUTSIDE, the air of the Martian winter was bitter cold. Snow spat against the windows of his coptor, and had he not been buoyed up by the wonderful properties of B. B. 107, Sam would have found the sound depressing. He resented snow that was not an inevitable aspect of nature, but merely the whim of the weather controller—as artificial as the snowstorm children make by inverting the castle and mountains contained in a glass paperweight.

The modern world was comfortable, but it was not real: not the food, not the shelter, not the clothing. Clothes were moulded from plastic fibers, unified garments without seams. He doubted that there was a single needle in all Marsport, outside the museum or the private galleries of antique collectors. People lived in their snug apartments, safe from the dark and cold of winter, incurious as to the source of their light and heat. And the food! Pre-tenderized, pre-cooked, preserved and then frozen, to be transformed into nutriment only at the table, with the flick of a button. If only, Sam thought wistfully, once more before he died, he could sniff the aroma of bacon,

slowly sizzling in an iron frying pan; or taste the warm rank freshness of a tomato, just plucked from its fuzzy green stem. Instead, he was on his way to dine with his nephew-to-be, who would inevitably offer him reconstituted tomato juice as the sole fortification against a tasteless meal.

It was after nine by the time Sam had parked his coptor on the roof and descended to John's apartment. He strode into the rosy glow of the living room, smiling exuberantly at Mara, hand outstretched to John. "Well, well, my boy! I hope I'm not late for your party! We men of science, you know—"

Withdrawing his hand from John's plump grasp, he realized that the fellow was undoubtedly getting fat, just as Mara had said—but John was a sound, respectable citizen, of course, or Sam would never have selected him to be Mara's husband. He was a little man barely five-feet-five, a trifle pompous; descendant of one of the pioneer Martian colonists, forty-six years old, owner of an enviable bank balance. His smile was only a trifle stiff as he replied to Sam's greeting. "I can hardly call you late, sir, when my third guest has not yet arrived."

"Another guest?"

"A distant cousin of my father's, widowed several years ago. Passing through Marsport on her tour of the galaxy. I've never met her, but it seemed only courteous to ask her."

"Quite right," said Sam. "Elderly people are always pleased at these little attentions."

Silence fell. Sam looked about him amiably. "Well, children. Why so subdued? You know Sam Baracol doesn't like being kept in the dark; when's the wedding to be?"

"When, indeed?" said Mara.

Black-banded hair gleaming as ebony, her slender face pretty as a flower above the silver gown and the black opal necklace Sam had given her on her sixteenth birthday, Mara was glar-

ing stubbornly at John, and John was glaring back.

SAM TRIED to still the alarm that jumped under his coat. It was not only that Mara was exhibiting her sulky temper to a perfectly-acceptable prospective husband; it was also that in the present state of his finances Sam could not afford to offend the man to whom he owed money—the man who could, if he chose, write a check in six figures without a single uneasy qualm as to its being honored.

So Sam chuckled, and continued to chuckle even as he accepted the inevitable glass of tomato juice. "What? Quarreling already? That's no way to treat a husband, my dear."

"He's not my husband yet," muttered Mara.

John coughed. "Women's whims, sir. How's the research? Anything new to report?"

Sam beamed. "Aha! If I didn't have a constitutional aversion to premature optimism— What are you looking at me like that for, Mara? Is my scarf crooked?"

"No-o," she said, wrinkling her forehead. "I guess it's nothing." She blinked her eyes, and turned away.

Sam hated to admit even to himself how the girl worried him. This was what came of being too indulgent to young females, he thought; they grew up to be argumentative and unfeminine. No wonder John was scowling.

"Maybe you'd better tell me what you're quarreling about, my dear," said Sam, folding his hands judiciously over his round paunch.

"It's about our children."

"Your children? But you're not married yet; you don't have any children."

"I know. But John has instructed me to produce three, two boys and a girl, and he will not allow me to do anything for them at all. Not even to wash their faces or tuck them into bed at night. He's already ordered two robonurses to look after them. Robots! When I'd much rather take care of them myself."

"Do you think I could permit my wife to work with her hands, like the primitives?" said John angrily. "I'd never live down the disgrace."

"But what about me?" cried Mara. "What am I going to do with myself, year after year? If you won't let me take care of my own children, you might at least let me go on with my study of chemistry."

John pursed his mouth in distaste. "Don't be vulgar, Mara. It was all right for you to play at studying when you were a child. That's merely a phase many girls go through and you may be sure I'll never reproach you with it. But when you're my wife, the sooner we forget about these early abnormalities, the better."

Mara blushed, but her eyes were defiant. "If you're ashamed of me, maybe you'd better not marry me."

"Maybe you're right!"

2



IN SPITE of his euphoric mood, Sam was alarmed. Had the girl developed into a moron, to risk losing a life of security, for a mere whim? He had spoiled her, he knew. As a young girl,

Mara had had a sprightly way about her, very pleasing to watch, and for a few years she had even shown signs of an intelligence which was astonishing, considering her sex. He had given her the run of his library during his long absences, and on his rare holidays with her in Marsport he had often given into her teasing, and allowed her to sit and watch whatever he had happened to be studying at the time. And even this past winter, when he had plunged into the study of extra-solar alkaloids, he had answered her artless questions, just as though she had been a boy. Well, if he

had been too indulgent a guardian, he was paying the penalty now. But she had been such a delightful child!

She used to try to convince Sam, on his occasional visits between space-hops, that women ought to be made first class citizens as they were rumored to be on some of the primitive planets with the right to vote to choose their own husbands, and even to hold responsible jobs. This always made Sam laugh, and his little gray eyes would crinkle amiably as he patiently explained to the child that the equality theory had been abandoned centuries ago, even on Earth where it had originated, and that subsequent experience on Mars and other planets had only confirmed that of Earth.

"Who conquered Space?" he used to ask her, with friendly indulgence. "Men! Who founded this colony on Mars? Men!"

"But weren't the women any use at all?" she asked, wrinkling her forehead under her long black bangs in a puzzled way. "Wouldn't the men have been awfully lonely without them?"

"Certainly, my dear, and Sam Baracol would be the last man to deny the obvious. Women are necessary, just as robots are necessary, though women are usually the more ornamental. But it would be ridiculous to think of either one as capable of becoming a first-class citizen."

"But I wish there were something we could *do*, once we're grown up!" she burst out once—the year she was eleven, and Sam had brought her a set of Aereopagian tiddly-winks as a belated birthday present. "It's only the children who have any fun, now. But I've read that in the old days on Earth—and even today in some places—women were allowed to do useful things—to mould their own costumes, to select the food, and—"

At this point Sam had been compelled to interrupt her sternly. "You're not a baby any longer, Mara. You'll soon be a woman, and if you want me

to find you a good husband you'll have to learn not to harbour such unconventional thoughts. You should be grateful that—in the civilized parts of the universe, at least—man's genius has made it unnecessary for his women folk to be degraded by manual labor. We have achieved for you an ideal existence, one which for your poor, hard-working, primitive maternal ancestors a few centuries ago was only a wistful dream. The only task we require of you any more is to bear children, a simple enough matter, and to comfort your husbands."

Even now Sam could remember the strange look on her face. It had distressed him, and he had reached over to pat her plump shoulder.

"Don't look so—so rebellious, my dear! It is simply a basic fact of nature which it is foolish to pretend to deny, that courage, nobility of character, and intelligence are the natural attributes of men, just as gentleness and docility are those of women."

She had given him an impish look. "I know it is unwomanly for me to question you, Sam. But if woman's happiness lies in being married, and in appreciating her good fortune in having the protection of a man, then why haven't you ever married one, and made her happy by letting her appreciate you?"

At this point Sam had changed the subject, hastily. As a peace-loving man, he had always made it a rule to avoid women as much as possible. But he had not been able to avoid his niece. Duty was duty, and he had tried to do his properly, even to arranging a marriage for her, in spite of her objections. It was wrong of any woman to be rebellious, but even now he could not bring himself to deal with her as harshly as she deserved.

SAM LOOKED at John and Mara, and sighed. "What you both need is a dash of Baracol's Bitters," he said soothingly. "Mara, you must try not

to be so unwomanly. Frankly, I am amazed at John's patience with you."

"I don't take any particular credit for it," said John, smiling complacently. "Women are good creatures, after all. And I always say that one undoubted cause of our alarming divorce rate here on Mars, and the shocking number of brides who desert their husbands, is that so many men so quickly forget the simple principle of *noblesse oblige*."

Mara was ominously silent.

Sam cleared his throat, and spoke quickly. "And now for my news! After many weeks of arduous labor, Sam Baracol has at last reached his goal! I have finally succeeded in neutralizing the mutually-antagonistic effects—"

A metallic click interrupted him. The door slid into the wall, and John sprang to his feet with a startled smile on his face. "My dear Mrs. Farranbee!"

"Just call me Belle!" she said gaily. "After all, aren't we cousins, of a sort? And is this your little bride? And this must be Mr. Baracol. I've been longing to meet you, Mr. Baracol, and I can hardly wait to get home and tell all the girls that I've actually met the famous 'Buccaneer!'"

Sam was speechless. Belle Farranbee was no elderly relic, fending off the boredom of her declining years by making a conducted tour of the galaxy. She was a red-haired woman in her mid-thirties, slender and energetic, and she spoke with the force of a small cannon. Reviewing quickly in his mind the characteristics popularly attributed to red-headed women, he decided that she probably had them all.

"Shall we go in to dinner?" said John.

"And I do hope you've put me next to Mr. Baracol," said Belle; "I know I could just listen to him forever!"

Sam's had been a life of adventure, even of peril. He had ranged every part of the galaxy, matching wits with the denizens of many alien planets, but rarely had he spent an evening buffet-

ed by so many conflicting winds of emotion.

The lady pleased him—and yet, she frightened him. Aware that his niece's black eyes were observing him with demure amusement, he was more than ever confused, but the euphoric optimism with which he had started the evening buoyed him up, and he slowly relaxed under Mrs. Farranbee's flattering questioning.

The dinner ended, they sat in the living room in the muted light appropriate to the post-prandial mood, while the wind howled outside and fine snow blew against the windows. Mara was strangely silent, but Belle Farranbee was volatile enough for ten, as she handed Sam his con-coffee, and blinked her long-lashed blue eyes at him. *If only Mara had the sense to give John half as much deference*, Sam thought, *there'd be nothing to worry about.*

THE WIDOW broke into his thoughts. "It must be wonderful to have your abilities, Mr. Baracol! I suppose there's simply nothing you can't do, if you make up your mind to it. Now, don't look so modest. We get the news, you know, even way back on Earth. Everybody knows that, though you've retired on your laurels, you still busy yourself at very secret work. People say you've begun some marvellous research, even though you could live like an emperor without ever lifting a finger again."

Sam winced, thankful that no one knew how close to zero were the credits at his disposal. "Ah well," he said. "I've a constitutional aversion to idleness."

He wished that Mara would not stare at him in that peculiar way, and to escape her intent gaze he moved his chair farther back into the shadows.

"You men are wonderful," said Belle. "Of course, I'm only a woman, but sometimes I get to thinking, and I feel so *useless!*"

"Just what you ought to be, ma'am," said Sam kindly; "that's how we want it to be."

"Exactly," said John, looking at Belle approvingly. "Only the most stupid of men would want the ladies to tarnish their brightness by intellectual labors."

Belle nodded, but her eyes were on Sam. "Won't you tell us about your new work, Mr. Baracol? This research I've heard rumors about?"

"Oh, it's nothing," said Sam, with a gratified chuckle. "These things aren't meant for you ladies to understand. You musn't bother your pretty heads about such things. Mara, I do wish you'd stop looking at me as though I were on object in a zoo. You make me nervous."

"I realize your work is far beyond my comprehension," said Belle, "but—"

"It's not beyond mine," Mara interrupted. "Chemistry fascinates me, and if you'd take my advice—"

"Don't be vulgar," said John.

"Do tell me about your research, Mr. Baracol. Will it be very valuable to science?"

"To humanity, rather, Mrs. Farranbee. Say rather, it will be a boon to humanity. To be specific, I am devoting my entire time, at present, to the perfecting of Baracol's Bitters."

"To what?"

"Baracol's Bitters." He settled back in his chair, his face in the shadows. "An elixir. In fact, I may say, *the* elixir. Have you noticed anything—unexpected—about me tonight?"

"Yes!" said Mara.

"I don't know what you mean," said Belle.

"I mean, isn't it apparent that I am ebullient, euphoric, glowing with a sense of well-being?"

"Glowing. That's the word I was looking for," remarked Mara, a small smile turning up the corners of her mouth.

"I still don't see—"

"It's simple enough," said Sam, ignoring his niece. "Since my—er, retirement, I've been dabbling in the chemistry of various alkaloids, and with their use I have achieved Baracol's Bitters, the elixir of the century, perhaps of the millennium!"

"But what is it *for*?" asked Belle.

"What is one of the chief irritants of modern life? Depression and causeless discontent, particularly among our women. What is a simple, time-honored remedy for depression? Liquor! The chill smoothness of the gin in the Polar Punch, the warming glow of the brandy in a Space Car, the reassuring comfort of a hundred different drinks in the far corners of the galaxy. But wait! What is the disadvantage of this, admittedly, alcoholic panacea? Alas—the hangover; the morning after. And that is where Sam Baracol steps in, making his revolutionary contribution. A dash or two of Baracol's Bitters, packaged in attractive bottles, when put into any drink whatsoever will produce a period of prolonged euphoria, with *no* hangover. Why, it will sweep the universe, and I shall be the benefactor of humanity!"

"To say nothing of our making millions, you and me," John said.

"Oh, yes. John has been supporting my research, I should have explained. But he'll be repaid a thousand per cent for his trifling investment."

"Oh, Mr. Baracol!" said Belle, her eyes bright with interest. "How wonderful! But why have I never heard of this before?"

"It's not on the market yet," he admitted.

"But why not?"

"Until now," he said, looking up with a new challenge in his eyes, a smile of calm confidence on his face, "until now it had not reached perfection. I have devised many formulae, but all of them, unfortunately, had some slight imperfection."

HE BECAME dreamy, reminiscent. "Formula 37, for instance, de-

pended upon a leuco-carotene derivative, closely related to vitamin A-7, from the giant *kaghaz* root. I had observed among the races of Shaitan VII—that land of witches and wizards, where the entire culture is founded on mutual hatreds within the family group—that an effusion of *khagaz* secretly added to a drink produced a temporary but deep euphoria which made the drinker practically indifferent to the knowledge that his brother or his uncle were smashing his furniture, or setting the house on fire. Unfortunately, as I discovered a couple of months ago, when administered to species native to the solar planets, the substance is oxidized in the body, and along with the euphoria it produces a remarkable yellowish-green tint of the skin which doesn't fade out for nearly forty-eight hours. I had to abandon that line.

"And formula 92 was especially promising, I remember, but it had a distressing effect on the optic nerves which made the subject—"

"That was me," said Mara, giggling.

"—which paralyzed the stereoscopic perception of the subject, and made him see everything as perfectly flat, without any perspective, like the early Martian paintings. Very awkward. And then, there was the supersonic whine. I forget what number that was."

"I'll never forget," said Mara. "It was 101, but as I told you at the time—"

"That will do, Mara! I knew, of course, that algazchinine was a potent euphorogen among the people of that planetary system, creating a gentle, soporific murmur in their minds which they esteem very highly. I never anticipated that the negligible differences in the range of audible sound-frequencies between the Algazarines and the Solarians would produce such a terrifying side-effect—a wailing, worrying, supersonic whine which totally destroys all sense of well-being."

"But you could have corrected it!"

said Mara eagerly. "If you'd only substituted the dextro isomer—"

"Quiet, child," said Sam. "These foolish recriminations are not necessary. Because now, at long last—"

John leaned forward. "You mean you've really got it? When do we go into production?"

"Oh, Mr. Baracol!" said Belle.

Sam nodded his head, solemnly, trying not to wonder about the disturbing, impish smile on Mara's face.

"Formula 107. I haven't wanted to make a premature announcement, so I haven't said anything until I was certain. I began testing it, on myself three days ago, and I had a final double dash only this evening, just before leaving my place. I've checked all my reflexes with the most minute attention, but I observe only that I am imbued with a sense of well-being. Sight, sound, touch, taste, balance, all normal. Yes, my friends, 107 proves to be the magic formula that will send a perpetual glow into all our hearts."

Into the awed silence broke the sound of a snicker. Mara put her hand to her mouth, but she could not control herself, and fell back, helpless with laughter.

Sam looked hurt, and John stared at her angrily, but she only laughed the harder.

"Oh, 107 is magic, all right," she gasped. "I suspected it early in the evening, and for the last half hour, as you've been sitting in that shadowed corner, I've been certain of it. I'll bet I could even guess what the formula is based on."

"You know very well what it's based on. The dextro form of the hydroxylaldehyde. You know I've been working for days on the various isomers of the active principle of *Agaricus phosphorens aldebarensis*, the particular chemical structures that cause the mushroom to glow in the dark. I've seen the natives use it in their festival rituals, with pronounced euphoric effects. And

I see nothing, nothing whatever, to justify such levity on your part."

"Oh dear," said Mara. "If you only knew!"

"Knew what?"

"How you look. You'll never believe me if I tell you; turn out the light."

"Have you lost your mind?"

"Just turn out the light! It'll be easier to see, in the dark. Just turn out the light and look in the mirror."

WITH A feeling of awful apprehension, Sam strode to the wall and touched the button. Only the unextinguishable night light filled the room as he stood before the mirror and peered at himself. Incredulously he covered his eyes with his hands, then looked again.

Sam Baracol had an aura. An impalpable, shimmering aura of rich purple glowed and glimmered out from his head, from the planes of his plump cheeks, from the fingers of his stubby hands—from every part of his body not covered with clothing shone a living, purple radiation.

"But why?" he cried. "I've seen it used a hundred times, I tell you!"

"By Aldebarenes," said Mara, "but not by us. Have you forgotten the power of natural selection? Obviously it has been at work in those planets, over the milleniums, to eliminate the body enzymes which oxidize the stuff; people who glow in the dark probably don't live as long as those who can remain invisible. But since our bodies have not had to adjust to the stuff, they have had no need to lose the enzyme, and we still have it. You look ghastly, Sam."

Hastily he turned on the light. Moaning incoherently, shoulders sagging, he tottered to a chair and drew out his notebook. He stared bleakly at that latest entry: "Eureka!" then drew a firm black line through the mocking word.

"Pride goeth..." said John sententiously.

Sam did not answer, only looked at the floor, until a soft pressure at his shoulder made him jump. Belle Farranbee was gazing down at him commiseratingly. "Never mind, Mr. Baracol. *I* have faith in you. You mustn't feel discouraged."

"Discouraged? Sam Baracol is *never* discouraged, ma'am!"

With a defiant flourish he turned to the next page, and in sprawling black strokes so vigorous that they nearly tore the paper, he made his new heading: "*B. B. 108.*"

3



THE next few weeks were among the most miserable of Sam's life. He felt harassed, beset by a sea of troubles, and Aereopagis III had never seemed so unattainable.

Heroically he kept to his laboratory, even after the aura had faded out, juggling formulae, testing mixtures. Some he discarded after one horrified sniff; others survived to be tried, once, before being consigned to the disposal. The cupboard, with its rows of empty bottles he kept firmly closed, not allowing himself the treacherous solace of looking at them and dreaming of the day when they would convey Baracol's Bitters to a grateful galaxy.

The widow Farranbee called frequently—too frequently. She had abandoned her galactic tour for the time being, and seemed all too likely to become a permanent fixture in Marsport. She dropped in at odd hours to cheer him on, as she said gaily, her blue eyes avid with interest as she prettily begged for the latest news of Sam's great scheme. Faced with those cornflower eyes, he felt helpless as a khar-gosh caught in the hypnotic gaze of a muggermuch—faced with the prospect

of permanent exile on Mars if he failed to recoup his fortunes, and faced with the fate scarcely less to be feared, of being engulfed by the widow, if he succeeded.

Occasionally he took an hour off and wandered down to the rocket-port to gossip with the captains, to watch the ships that came and went, knowing that some of them, at least, must have touched at that old-fashioned world where people worked with their hands, and regarded even so archaic a device as the telephone as a dangerous invader of privacy.

During these days of frustration he could feel Mara's silent sympathy as she moved softly about his rooms, but he haughtily rejected her advances; her reluctance to settle down as a woman should, and marry John, was only one more hindrance to clear and concentrated thinking on his problem.

John was losing patience with Mara's moodiness, and he was losing faith in Sam. After formula 129 had been discarded (it produced a twenty-four hour tingling of the hands and feet, like that of a mild electric shock,) John had refused to provide further financial aid, and Sam was left to manage as best he could.

One by one, his treasured ornaments disappeared from his sittingroom. After B. B. 140 he parted with the little bronze hippo, with its bulging eyes of black opal, that he had dredged from a Venusian swamp. With B. B. 165, he gave up the rosary of tiger claws he had won in his famous gambling-match with the aborigine chief of Aldebaran's nameless seventh planet. And he had just completed the protocol for B. B. 197 when Mara found him, one morning, despondently fingering his most cherished relic, the rusty tin dipper that had hung by a well on Aereopagis III.

MARA LOOKED at him in alarm. "Sam Baracol! Surely you're not going to sell *that!*"

"What else can I do, my dear? I need new chemicals."

"But that's your favorite piece!"

"I know. And it reminds me of a place, a wonderful place where you could get cool, fresh water by just dipping into a shady well, and... But no matter. It's a valuable antique, and the collectors will fight for it. It will bring me in a tidy sum; and when I'm at the very threshold of success, can you expect me to be held back from crossing it by refusing to part with what is, after all, only a lump of metal?"

"Couldn't you sell my opals? They'd bring in a tidy sum, too."

"And have to remember for the rest of my life that Sam Baracol was pulled out of a jam by a mere woman?"

"Come and sit down a minute, Sam," she said. "Here, I'll put a footstool for your feet. Does it really mean so much to you, to perfect your Bitters? Why don't you give up? You're getting thinner; you're turning old before my eyes. Is Baracol's Bitters worth the struggle? I don't care about the money, you know, and I don't care about John. Why don't we both just leave here, quietly, and hop a freighter for some out-of-the-way planet. We could always make a living, somehow."

"No," said Sam; "it can't be done."

"But why not?"

"For one thing, there's the money I've had to borrow from John; I can't run away without paying him, can I?"

She looked shrewdly at his puckered face. "It wouldn't be the first time you'd pulled a trick like that, or I miss my guess."

"That's as may be," said Sam, blushing. "But by my age I've learned one thing; crime doesn't pay. What if I wanted to come back here some day?"

"All right, then. Let's go away and earn the money somehow, and send it to him later. Forget about Baracol's Bitters."

"Never!"

"Why not?"

"We Baracols never give up."

"But why not?"

Sam fidgeted, uneasily. "Look here, Mara, even a woman ought to be able to understand. Aside from my natural and commendable pride in carrying through a project once I've started it, there's my duty as your guardian—and I can't get out of it with a clear conscience. It's my duty, first, to see you settled securely in a civilized part of the universe where you can live in comfort. And John will never marry you if you're a penniless girl."

"But if I don't want to marry him?"

"Women never know what they want," he said impatiently; "that's why they need men to tell them. Besides, John's feelings would be hurt if you broke your engagement."

"Bother his feelings; he could marry the widow. Is that your only reason, Sam?"

"Well, no. You must never breathe this to a living soul, Mara; I hate being laughed at. But the fact is, I want to be free to roam again, to escape from civilization. I particularly want to go back for a visit to an old-fashioned world—no atomic power, no robots, no radio or telebands—but it has a certain charm..."

"Then why don't you just go?"

"A small matter of back income taxes prevents me. I had some dealings there with a tin mine, once, and in my haste at leaving I—that is, I overlooked the paying of the usual profit taxes. If I go back without money to pay, I'll go to prison."

"We'll pay them, somehow, and you can take me with you."

"Space, no! Women have to *work* there, Mara. They cook the family's meals; they dust the furniture; they plant kitchen gardens. They have a few hours leisure in the evenings, but I solemnly assure you that most of their day is occupied in cooking, sewing, and attending to the comfort of their husbands and children. It would be criminal of me to condemn you to a life so uncivilized. Me, now, I'm an ana-

chronism; I'm a tramp; I ought to be ashamed of myself, and I *am* ashamed. But Sam Baracol faces facts, and that's where I want to go—when I realize a fortune from Baracol's Bitters."

AS SAM gently stroked the rusty tin dipper, Mara studied her shoe, her eyes dreamy and abstracted. At last she looked up. "Sam. If you make a fortune, don't you realize that woman means to marry you?"

Sam smiled. "Does she, my dear? Well, she's not the first. But on the other hand, I've got out of tight places before, and it's a calculated risk I'm taking. There's no use your arguing with me; my mind is made up."

She jumped to her feet in sudden decision. "All right, Sam, we'll say no more about it. Now, show me your latest formula. You know I might be able to help you, just a little."

She studied the page with concentration, half closing her eyes, tapping her tongue against her teeth as she slowly nodded.

"I see," she murmured. "I see. Still trying the *Agaricus phosphorens*. This is mighty tricky stuff to play with, as you know, but I agree that the impurities have probably been eliminated by the chromatographic column. I see you're coupling the dextro-rotatory isomer of the dehydro structures—that's sensible. . . Sam! I think you've got it. This might work!"

"Do you really think so?"

"I do indeed. Yes, this just—might—work!"

"Then what are we waiting for?" cried Sam. "Give me your opals, my dear, and I'll be off to the bazaars. In a few weeks, I promise you, you'll be wearing diamonds in their place!"

The next two weeks were furiously busy. Adjusting the balance of the several optical isomers proved a more delicate job than he had expected, but Sam's energy never abated. Now that Mara had become so unexpectedly docile, he made no objection to her help-

ing him, and together they worked from chilly dawn to snowy dark, day after day.

They tried to hide their rising excitement, but the rosy prospect of good fortune is not easy to conceal, and they began to receive more frequent visits from John and his widowed cousin—visits which in recent weeks had been few, far-between, and uncomfortable. Both John and Belle now checked on each day's progress with nervous eagerness.

"Waiting to see which way the cat will jump," Sam remarked to his niece. "Well, this time it's going to jump the way Sam Baracol tells it to."

Mara smiled, and said nothing.

John brought flowers to Mara again, and went so far as to offer Sam further capital—which he manfully refused. As for Belle, Sam almost had it in his heart to feel sorry for her, as she alternately smiled on him, and flattered John—obviously wavering between the capture of John and one modest competence, probable, and Sam and one limitless fortune, possible. Mara seemed unaware of the widow's nervous maneuvering; she had now become the model little woman Sam had always advised her to be—docile, gentle, never contradicting him. She rarely opened a conversation, now, and seemed indifferent to the world about her.

One evening, staring idly at the fireplace, she did speak of her own accord. "Sam. What's become of your Aereopagian dipper? The one that always hung there on the wall?"

"It's quite safe, my dear. Quite safe, I assure you."

"More chemicals, I suppose," she murmured, and let the subject drop, to Sam's great relief. Once she would have teased him for details, eagerly, but now—was the girl even becoming a little dull? But he loyally crushed the thought. Events were working out just as he had hoped, weren't they? Then why should he feel dissatisfied?

When B. B. 197 was ready for trial,

Sam cannily decided to test it thoroughly in private, for he felt he could not survive another public humiliation.

THAT evening they relaxed before the fire, while Felix, the roboval, deftly mixed and served his incomparable Polar Punches. Sam added two dashes of B. B. 197, entered the data in his notebook, then they raised their glasses in salute.

"To the Bitters!" said Sam.

They drank. They had a second. And the euphoria it produced was so agreeable that they had a third, and yet another, laughing delightedly in their pleasure at being alive, while dinner was forgotten.

Morning came, with no trace of a headache, and they still felt in perfect harmony with the universe. That evening they repeated the dose, and when the following morning's test showed that sight, hearing, touch, balance and taste were still completely normal, Sam abandoned all restraint.

"Tonight, we throw a party. *What* a party we'll have!"

Exuberantly he released the cupboard barrier and brought out the comet bottles which had waited there empty for so long, their sides glowing with the radiant flame of *Baracol's Bitters*. Felix was invaluable in helping to prepare the elixir on a large scale, and for once Sam forgot to grumble about the nuisance of animated machines. Although Mara was somewhat preoccupied—as she often was of late—still she donned protective gloves, cap, and smock, and carefully measured the ingredients, adding them gently to the bubbling mixture which she stirred with a glass rod, to keep it from bumping. Sam himself prepared the adsorption column and placed the funnel ready to fill the first bottle.

By late afternoon they were all filled, fifty bottles with their comet tails swirling jauntily into the face of the universe, and Sam stopped work. "And now, Mara, I think we are ready for the final demonstration?"

He turned in surprise when she did not answer. "It's foolish to weep, my dear, with success at our doorstep."

"Oh, Sam!" she cried. "Don't think too badly of me!"

"What are you talking about?"

"I mean, you've provided for me since I was a little girl. I'm sorry I've always been such a worry to you. I've tried to be sensible, but I can't help being what I am. Do you understand?"

"I never have understood women," said Sam impatiently, "and I'm too old to begin now. Felix, my cape; Mara, get yourself prettied up. I'm going now, to collect our guests."

Ignoring the appeal in her eyes, Sam began to whistle.

"Wait!" he heard her call. But he shut the panel behind him, ascended to the roof, and shot off in his copter.

IT WAS fully dark by the time he returned, the eager widow on his arm, her eyes as bright as her red hair, with John stumbling impatiently on their heels.

Sam's sittingroom had never looked prettier, for all the bareness of the shelves where once his souvenirs had stood. The simiogs in the fireplace emitted perfectly shaped blue-tipped flames, the sound system produced the crackling sound of burning wood with high fidelity. Brilliant red and yellow flowers from the hydroponic tanks graced the laboratory table where the bottled reagents now stood in tidy rows. And on the polished coffee table stood a silver tray bearing four bellied glasses filled with the cool bubbiness of the Polar Punch. Beside them was a single glowing comet bottle, ready and waiting.

But the room was empty; even Felix was absent from his usual corner. "Mara!" Sam called. "Our guests are here!"

Within a moment she hurried through the wall-panel, breathing quickly, her cheeks flushed to unusual pinkness, her black eyes sparkling.

"Where's Felix?" he asked.

"I sent him away. I know your feelings, Sam, and I thought this was the kind of a celebration when perhaps you'd rather have just ourselves."

"Quite right. And now—"

Sam moved to the table. The others hardly dared breathe as he lifted the bottle, inverted it, and shook two dashes from the comet's hairy tresses into each waiting glass. He handed them round, then raised his towards the ceiling in a proud toast. They drained their glasses to the bottom, while Mara silently prepared another round.

"Not bad," said John.

"Oh, Mr. Baracol," said Belle, misty-eyed. "This is delicious. How I do admire you men of genius, you captains of finance. How I envy the woman who is privileged to share your exciting life."

Sam choked, but managed to convert the sound into a deprecating laugh. "You flatter me, ma'am. Do you really like it, John?"

"Excellent, excellent! Tell me, what is your formula based on?"

"It's all in my notes," said Sam airily. "No man could be expected to carry such a complex thing in his head. Besides, I could hardly give away a trade secret, could I?"

"Whatever it is, it's making me positively jovial. And you say it has no distressing side-effects? Wonderful! I don't know when I've felt so young. May I have another?"

As the evening wore on, Sam suggested food, but they laughed at him. It was ridiculous to think of interrupting their careless, euphoric mood; they could have food some other day. At last John set down his glass and smoothed his face into solemnity.

"No more just now, Sam. First, let me congratulate you on the discovery of the millenium. The world will long bless your name. And now—to business! All evening, little Mara has been sitting shyly in her corner, but perhaps she will be more cheerful when I tell her that I have decided to have our

wedding within the next month, as soon as possible."

"Don't you think weddings are romantic, Mr. Baracol?" said Belle.

"But first," said John firmly, "comes business. Lend me your pen, Sam."

4



EARING a sheet of paper from his pocket engagement book, John scrawled a hasty sentence and signed his name with a flourish. "Here you are! A free and unconditional cancellation of your indebtedness to

me; we can't have these petty financial differences within the family, you know."

"Wait!" cried Mara.

"Wait? Why should I?"

"This is noble of you, John," said Sam. "But are you quite sure— I wouldn't want to seem to take advantage of you, you know. Perhaps later?"

John beamed on him happily. "I admire your sense of rectitude, Sam, and I honor you for it—but I insist."

"Well," said Sam, pocketing the paper. "Since you insist."

"And now, what about capital? We'll want to go into mass production at once. Why, this will sweep the galaxy off its feet! Do you think a hundred thousand credits will do for a start?"

"For a start," said Sam.

All eyes were on John as he spread open his checkbook, and placed pen to paper. "Let—me—see. . ."

They held their breaths.

Suddenly he dropped the pen and put his hand to his eyes. "What the hell's going on here?" he shouted.

He stood up, took a step forward, then grabbed at his chair.

"I'm falling!" he cried. "Save me!" Lurching forward, he fell flat to the

floor and began crawling, moaning as he inched along; clutching ineffectually at the smooth tiles, until he bumped against the wall. Gasping, he tried to climb up the wall, digging his fingers into the surface.

"Give me something to hang onto, you idiot!"

Sam stared in sick bewilderment, unable to move, until he was jerked around by a shriek from Belle. She, too, had wavered to her feet, her eyes large with horror. She clutched at the arm of her chair, swayed dizzily, then threw herself onto the floor. "Help! I'm slipping! Save me!"

Sam gulped.

"This is your fault, Sam Baracol!" shouted John. "This finishes you for good. You're a family of lunatics, and I wouldn't marry your niece if she were the last woman in the galaxy! Call the po—"

Crash! He had butted against a table, and a pot of flowers hurled onto his head.

Mrs. Farranbee rose to her knees and inched along the floor, grabbing desperately at the legs of a table—and the laboratory table overturned with a crash as bottles cascaded to the floor, spilling their contents. One lone *Agaricus phosphorens*, dried and shrivelled, clung to her hair as she raised her head.

"If I can only make it to the wall!" she gasped. "Sam Baracol, I'll have you detained for life! You fraud! You criminal!" At the wall at last, she began a panting effort to push herself up.

Sam overcame his paralysis. He took a step forward, hand outstretched. "I don't understand!" he began. Then faltered, and threw himself onto the floor like a man diving for safety. He lay on his stomach, hanging on grimly to the legs of his chair as he moaned in frustrated rage. He glanced over his shoulder at the ceiling, stole a quick look to each side, then screwed his eyes shut to keep out the whirling confusion.

The room had turned upside down.

He and the furniture seemed to be clinging to the ceiling, ready to fall at any minute with a sickening drop to the bare black ceiling which had been above them, but now yawned fifteen feet below. In the chaotic noises of the room, it was impossible for him to think clearly, and sweat ran over him as he tried to understand what had happened, to separate the room's appearance from the reality as his mind knew it to be.

"I'm ruined," he muttered. "This is the end. Sam Baracol, ruined by an isomer."

He heard a scuffling noise at his side, and a hard object was thrust into his hands. "Quick, Sam," Mara whispered. "Put on these glasses. And give me your hand."

THE FREIGHTER had been slogging through space for nearly a week now, and still Sam hesitated to take off his dark glasses, afraid that he would not yet be able to see the world right side up. That last evening had taken a lot out of him, and hour after hour he sat at the table in the tiny cabin, hands nervously intertwining, his body slack, helpless as a blind man.

At intervals he could hear Mara's chattering footsteps as she scurried about her duties, humming a tune as she put plates of food on the table, filled water glasses, and finally cleared away. To Sam's bewilderment, she sounded happier than she had since childhood, although she was at work hour after hour.

She sat down on the bench beside him, one evening after supper, and her voice was gay as she tried to rally him. "Cheer up, Sam. The first hundred years are the hardest."

But Sam did not respond. He was a failure; he, Buccaneer Baracol, was a fugitive on a tramp spacer, bound for an unknown port. He was still puzzled over what had gone wrong, but whatever fatal molecules had been lurking in formula 197, there was no doubt

about its effect: a sudden assault on the optic nerves, which had been halted in their accustomed task of translating the reversed image which normally impinges on the retina. The process had been blocked at this point, just short of completion, and the poor fools who had only been seeking a safe euphoria had been confronted with a world which refused to turn right side up.

Never until his dying day he thought, would he forget the catastrophe of that last evening in Marsport. That awful moment when first for John, then for Belle, and finally for himself, the world had reversed itself. Until that moment he had been so certain of success, and then—cataclysm.

In spite of his misery, Sam chuckled. The memory of the sight before his eyes just before they had stopped functioning was one to warm his old reprobate's heart. The pompous John, ramming into the furniture and bleating with pain as he felt a million credits slipping from his grasp. The eager widow, her sweet talk turned sour. Three people who would better have been blind, groping through a topsy-turvy room, yelling and smashing the furniture.

How Mara had been able to manage, that awful night, he scarcely remembered. The confusion had been too great. He could remember the cool firmness of Felix's metal grip, the crispness of Mara's voice as she gave orders about trunks and boxes which seemed somehow to be packed and ready within the instant; then the hurried flight after midnight to the port, and the stumbling climb into the spacer, hanging onto Mara's arm.

SUDDENLY, behind his glasses Sam's eyes narrowed. *What* was it he had just been thinking? *Three* people? That was his trouble, he thought in disgust. Until now he hadn't been thinking at all, he had only been feeling sorry for himself. So he had been pitying himself as a failure, had he?

Why, he was stupid as a callow boy, stupid as—a woman!

Cursing himself for a doddering idiot, Sam sat up straight and spoke to his niece in a dulcet voice. "Mara."

"Yes, Sam?"

"Do you consider yourself to be an intelligent woman?"

She hesitated. "No. Not very."

"Do you not think of yourself, perhaps, as a veritable genius?"

"No, I don't, and you frighten me when you use that tone of voice."

But Sam's voice became a roar as he whipped off the dark glasses and glared at the girl. "Do you not, in fact, set yourself up as having an intellect *superior to that of Sam Baracol?*"

Mara shrank from the accusation in his eyes. "Why are you talking to me like this?"

"Because," said Sam, "I've just remembered. That night, that awful night that saw the destruction of my hopes, the night my dreams of wealth came tumbling round me like a house of straw—that night only three of us succumbed to the blight of Baracol's Bitters. *Only three*. Will you explain to me, please, why you, and you alone were not affected?"

Her voice was a mere whisper. "I—I don't know."

"So. You don't know. You are mysteriously immune to the laws of physiology, but you don't know why." He regarded her thoughtfully, then, closing his eyes, he sank back supinely.

"Ah, well, I'm an old man now, thankful for small favors like being permitted to see the world right side up. Dependent on the youth and strength of my dutiful niece, who slaves away, morning and night, working as a common stewardess to earn our bread and passage to—nowhere."

His voice soared with melancholy as he went on. "Baracol's Bitters were just a bubble. I'm just a failure, a mere has-been. You can bring me a cup of gruel, my dear, before you go to seek your bunk, and I'll thank you kindly."

From slitted eyes he saw tears roll down her cheek, though she tried to laugh. "Sam, you're an old fraud."

He only shook his head, despondently, and she began to twist her hands. "Sam."

"Yes, child?"

"I have a confession to make."

He cocked an eyebrow. "You astonish me; what in the world can so young a girl have to confess?"

Then her words came with a rush. "It's this way, Sam. You were so unreasonable. You admitted you couldn't stand the civilized world yourself, but you were determined that it was the best thing for me. I had to take it, and like it. Well, I couldn't. So when you took away my last hope of escape, with your B. B. 197—"

"Ah! So I'm not a failure, after all? Are you trying to shock my weak nerves by telling me I had found *the* formula?"



MARA NODDED. "Of course; I could tell that as soon as you showed it to me. It was a brilliant piece of work. Well, I could see that with Baracol's Bitters a success, and you a Marsport millionaire, I was trapped, for life. And what was worse, so were you, and you didn't seem to realize it at all; that widow would never have let you go. You went out that evening, so happy and confident, I could hardly bear it. I hated to do what I did, but I had to. I had to save you from yourself."

"Sam, you'll never forgive me, but while you were out that night, I added a whole milligram of the leuodehydroaldehydine to that bottle of bitters!

And after the first round, I simply left the bitters out of my drinks."

"So *that's* what did it!"

"You mean you knew all the time?"

"That you'd changed the formula? Of course," he said blandly. "You have to get up very early in the morning to fool Sam Baracol, my dear, as many people before you have discovered. It was obvious. And after that—after you'd succeeded in convincing all Marsport that your uncle was a dangerous lunatic, after you'd ruined all your chances for a good husband—what were your plans after that?"

"I had it all worked out. I simply put Felix to packing our bags, and after I'd fixed the bitters, I rushed down to the port and made my arrangements—that's why I was late for our party. Wasn't I lucky to find this freighter just ready to blast off? And Captain Grimes was so kind about agreeing to take us."

"Captain *who*?"

"Captain Grimes, a very agreeable man. I figured we could make a fresh start, far away where no one has ever heard of us. And perhaps you won't look so much like a thundercloud when I tell you something else." She patted the pocket of her blouse. "What do you think I've got in here?"

Sam yawned. "Oh, the formula, I suppose. B. B. 197."

"You mean you knew all along?"

"I wasn't born yesterday. In the old days, pioneer women always took along a little nest-egg when they set out for new frontiers. It was perfectly logical for you to take the formula."

"You mean you don't still think me unwomanly, for wanting to run away?"

"Women! I've given up trying to understand them. The primitive societies were certainly mistaken in allowing equality to women, but still they seemed, somehow, to have less trouble with the creatures than we do. That puzzles me, I admit, for you're undoubtedly the inferior sex. But from now on, you can do as you like."

"How can you be so ungrateful?" she said angrily. "After all I've done for you! Where do you think you'd be now, if I hadn't taken charge and rushed you to safety?"

Sam smiled lazily. "Exactly where I am now. On this freighter."

"You would not; you'd be in prison! Or married."

"I rather think not. No, I rather think I'd be exactly where I am now. Tell me, Mara, where do *you* think we are now?"

"We're on an old tramp freighter, bound for one of the Arcturian planets."

"Nonsense. What would we be doing in the Arcturian system? Is that what Grimes told you? Now you listen to your poor old uncle, that you've been trying so hard to protect. I've been telling you for years that a woman's intelligence should never try to compete with a man's. Did you really suppose that it was entirely due to your feminine luck that you just *happened* to find this freighter ready to blast off? What did you offer Captain Grimes for pay, by the way?"

"My services for the voyage, and— and a lifetime supply of B-Baracol's B-Bitters."

"Then he's not done so badly, considering that he's also pocketed the entire proceeds of the sale of my Aereo-pagian tin dipper."

"What do you mean?"

"My child, when will you learn not to underestimate me? Sam Baracol just doesn't overlook important details. This ship has been waiting for me, undergoing repairs, from the day I was sure of success. It's true I hadn't intended to disappear quite so soon, but from the look in the widow's eye, I knew I'd have to be ready to run—and fast! And here we are."

"And where are we going?" she asked meekly.

"And you claim to be intelligent? Why, to Aereo-pagis III, of course. Where else?"

Her face broke into a delighted smile as she gazed at his complacent smile. "Why, Sam! You old Buccaneer!"



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EARTHFALL

This place was a primitive paradise, a haven. But a spaceman became tired of the pastoral life after a while . . .

by Barry Nelson

(illustrated by Milton Luros)

HE WAS TIRED after the long struggle to stay alive. He was tired, bone-tired of the incredible flight from the forces of his ruler, which he had deserted. He wished he could lie down and sleep for a week, a month, forever. But he didn't dare sleep, with the ship in the condition it was—robot-pilot gone, all automatic warning devices shot to hell, some of the instruments blown and the rest not very reliable. There was nothing for him to do but stay awake.

And then he saw the planet, one he could land on and perhaps have some chance of staying alive... a big green world, close to the G-type sun, but not too close. The temperature should be just about right, and if the color was any indication it was an oxygen-carbon planet. They weren't any too common, and he was thankful for any small favors. But even if it wasn't much of a place, he hadn't any other choice; he had to land, before his water and food gave out.

He cut in the automatic landing spiral control, one of the few devices on the ship that was still in working order, and tried to relax. It's not easy to relax, when you may be dead in a few hours, or even a few minutes. The landing control might be haywire, after all, and down he'd go, burning up, cherry-red, flashing across the blue sky like a meteor. Not a very pleasant

way to die, he thought, but then what way is?

After a few minutes the ship began to slow in the tenuous upper reaches of the atmosphere, and he breathed a small prayer to his personal god. Maybe he'd manage to scrape out of this alive, after all.

Closer and closer the little ship swooped, down to the green surface of the planet. And as it screamed past it, he noticed that the surface was very fair, soft and warm, inviting. Perhaps this wouldn't be such a bad place after all; not a bad place to live.

Then it hit him, what he had just thought, that last part about a place to live. What if he couldn't repair the ship? Would he be able to stay on the surface of a planet for the rest of his life? Planetbound? No longer free to go where he pleased in the wide galaxy? He stopped thinking about it, pushing it to the back of his mind. Right now he had to concentrate on getting the rickety crate on the ground.

Across vast blue oceans he flashed, over endless stretches of green plains, past mighty forests, over cool lakes and meandering rivers. The scenery was soothing; he felt strangely at home here. *This is where you belong*, the land seemed to whisper; *this is home*.

He landed.

THE SHIP was nestled in long lush grass, beside a rippling, gurgling lake. He tested the air; breathable. He tested for bacteria, viruses, fungi: nothing harmful. He ran, fast, grinning like a fool, to throw open the airlock. Suddenly he caught himself. Why the hell was he running? *This is just another planet, a stopping-off until your ship is fixed*, he told himself angrily. *You'd think you were home*, he added, grinning.



ing the airlock door. He stepped in and opened the outer door.

The air was heavenly. Clear, cool, rich and heady, after the stale, canned air of the ship, and he breathed it in, in great gulping breaths. He couldn't get enough of it; he jumped down quick into the lush grass and found himself leaping and running through it, like a crazy kid. He stopped, laughing at himself.

"Wait till I get home, and tell people about this. This is the most beautiful planet I've ever seen. And I discovered it. It's mine."

He wondered for a moment why no one had ever seen it before, but realized that one small system, way out on the fringe of the galaxy, is very easily overlooked. It would take an eternity to examine every star.

He ran down to the lake, tossing off his uniform, and dove into the silvery waters. It was cool, but not cold, just bracing. He swam about in it for a while, ridding himself of the accumulated grime, sweat and stink of three weeks in space, and then came out. As he was getting dressed, he looked around, embarrassed. What if someone had seen him, naked? Then it hit him—what was wrong, what was different.

The planet was silent.

There was nothing stirring but the trees and the water behind him. No sound of birds, not a chirr from an insect, nothing. The ship couldn't have frightened anything, for it was silent as it descended.

He stooped down and peered at the ground. No bugs, no nothing.

It hardly seemed possible. Balance of nature, he thought. There must be insects and birds, or else everything would die. It wasn't natural.

A little frightened—he called it puzzled—he returned to the ship, which before had seemed like a hateful prison, now, a haven.

But before he got to the ship he threw off the fear and tossed back

"You *are* home," part of him whispered, but he did not hear it.

He pressed a button and heard a battery-driven motor humming, open-

his head, laughing at the sunshine and the beauty of the planet. Why should there be insects? Perhaps there was a different ecology on this planet; all worlds differed in some respects.

He turned and smiled at the sunlight glinting redly through the trees; he nodded to the trees—and then suddenly, at their base, was the girl.

HE STARED at her, and she stared back at him.

She was beautiful, and he couldn't help wondering how he looked to her. He took a step forward, and so did she. The nearer she came, the more lovely she looked.

She was small and slender, high-bosomed, womanly-hipped, straight-legged, nude. And yet she wore her nakedness so naturally that he did not feel it was different or unusual; it belonged to her. Her hair was long and golden-red in color, hanging down her back like a rippling river of flame. Her skin was very fair, but her eyes were dark as night. They were so dark, he couldn't see the pupils, and it gave her a curious blank, almost soulless look. Her mouth was full, sensuous, blood-red.

He stared at her for a long minute and then said shyly—he had never been shy before—, "Hello."

She answered, incomprehensibly, but he sensed from her warm tone that it was a welcome. He smiled, and she smiled back, showing even white teeth.

She came up to him, smiling again; she barely reached his chin.

She murmured wonderingly and stroked the black hair on his chest. He restrained an impulse to follow suit; who knew what husband, father or lover might be watching, and might resent it?

Suddenly she took him by the hand and started to lead him toward the forest. He hung back and she looked at him, puzzled. He shook his head, and moved toward the ship; she nodded, smiling, and followed him.

Motioning her to stay outside, he swung up into the lock and strapped on his old service pistol. He felt slightly ashamed of his mistrust, but habit was too strong, and he finished buckling on the heavy gun. He was now ready to go with the strange, lovely girl.

SHE LED him swiftly across the flowered meadow, and into the cool shade of the towering trees. He gazed about at the flowering vines, pouring their sweet perfume into the morning air, but she pulled him on eagerly.

Soon they came to a little village. It was spotless, fresh, lovely. Little cottages nestled among the trees, and neat gardens and lawns marked the loving industry of the inhabitants.

He looked around, sighed, and then with a return of his habitual cynicism, said to himself that there must be a joker somewhere; it was just too perfect.

She drew him to one of the larger houses, all glass and plastic, simple and stark, but charming in its very simplicity.

Before the house, an old man was standing. He was tall and white-haired, imposing, and he too was nude; but, as with the girl, it seemed natural.

The old man smiled and welcomed him to the house. The girl followed him inside. He glanced back as he entered and saw a few people leaning on their fences, looking at him, but no one seemed very excited. Was this the way they greeted a man from the stars?

A voice said: "Welcome to this house."

He whirled about and saw that the voice was apparently coming from a small box on a table.

"That is correct," the voice continued, "this is one of the ancient machines that once ruled this planet, but are now again only servants. The thoughts of the master of this house are fed into the machine and translated into symbols, and so are your thoughts."

The machine again translates the thoughts into the other's symbology. Ergo, you understand the machine."

His estimation of these people was suddenly and drastically revised. No savages, these—rather a people who had gone past civilization and returned to a simpler life.

"That is correct," the box answered.

He reddened, angrily. *No privacy here*, he thought.

"One does not need privacy, if one is not ashamed of one's thoughts," came the box's amused reply.

"But this is too slow," it went on. "they are bringing another ancient machine from the vaults. A machine which will teach you our language in a matter of hours."

He and the girl sat and smiled at one another for a while, until two middle-aged men entered and interrupted them. The two men were carrying a tiny black case between them; it seemed to be enormously heavy, to judge from the effort they were exerting. They motioned him over to it and pointed to a small handle. He took it, and suddenly the room was black; there was a great silence, a great nothingness.

WHEN HE awoke it was dark. A soft, cool hand was in his. It was the girl of the forest, sitting beside him.

She asked, "Are you awake?"

He understood her. The machine actually worked. What a civilization they must have had here. And to throw it over for a return to nature—he shook his head wonderingly.

"Are you all right? The machines are thousands of years old, and we were a little afraid they might not work."

"Thousands of years old? How old is this planet?"

"As old as mankind. Older."

He looked into those peculiar, dark eyes. "What's your name?"

"Ev," she answered.

"Mine is Roger," he told her proudly, but of course she had never heard of the proud Roger clan.

She merely smiled and touched his cheek softly, fascinated by the first faint stubble of his beard.

The days went by swiftly, softly, unnoticed.

He became friends with the people of the village. Not that they had ever been unfriendly, but it took a while before they were more than just polite.

He became more than friends with Ev. In fact, he fell very much in love with her. But he said nothing.

One morning, while Roger was shaving, she entered his room, with her father, his host, and mentioned, "My but you must be primitive people, when you still have body hair."

He flushed, resentful at being called a primitive, especially when he thought of them as savages.

"Now, child," chided the old man. "You mustn't be rude. They are not primitive—just not evolved as much as we. Or perhaps it was the radiations our ancestors suffered in the last war of all."

"You have had wars, here, then?" Roger asked.

"Oh, yes, untold centuries ago; when this planet was young we had many wars. The last one was shortly after we sent the great fleets out to the stars. you know. Your ancestors."

"My ancestors," he stared.

He looked surprised. "Oh, yes, didn't you know? This is Earth."

Roger looked at him blankly. "Earth?"

"Yes, Earth."

"So what?"

The old man was non-plussed. "Why, why Earth is the original home of mankind. Do you mean to say," his voice trailed to a whisper, "that they have forgotten Earth, out there?"

"I never heard of it, and I've been around an awful lot. A dozen planets claim to be the original home of man—but then some other planet will claim it is, because it has the oldest ruins, and so forth. Some people say that Man just evolved on all the planets

about the same time. Who knows?"

"We know; we are the homeland. So they have forgotten." He shook his grey head sadly. "But didn't you perhaps feel something when you landed here. A feeling that this was home?"

He admitted that he did, but said it was probably because he had been cooped up in the ship for so long. Then he finished shaving.

THAT NIGHT he was lying on the shore of the little lake where his ship was standing, with Ev by his side. They had been swimming, and were now relaxed, wet and tired on the soft grass. He was very conscious of the girl beside him.

"Roger," she asked, "is it true, that you have never heard of Earth, out there?" she waved her hand at the countless winking lights of heaven.

"Sure, it's true; but what does that matter? Maybe it's true what you say—that we all came from Earth—but I don't care; I haven't any use for tradition. That's why I'm here now. I was running away from tradition." The tradition was in the form of a firing squad, but he neglected to mention that. "When I go home, I'll tell them about it—maybe start a tourist resort or something. Original Home of Mankind. You know."

The girl gave a little gasping sigh.

"Ev, Ev, what's the matter, are you crying?"

"Are you really going home?"

"No, of course not," he said, "that was just talk." He leaned over to brush away the tears and suddenly he was kissing her. It was a long kiss, with a promise of passion.

"Roger," she murmured.

They made love slowly, tenderly at first, then with a mounting passion that swept everything before it.

"Roger," she murmured again. She was his.

The weeks went by swiftly, softly, but not unnoticeably. He began to get restless, bored. Swimming, running,



playing in the sun, even making love to Ev, was beginning to pall. He wished he had a drink; he wished he had something to *do*; something to tinker with. He found himself out at his old ship, more and more. Ev watched with sad eyes, as he slowly repaired it. She knew.

Then the day came; the ship was ready, and he was ready. He could no longer stand the cloying, lotos-eater atmosphere. He had to be away and beyond, doing something; that was his life.

It was early, very early. He rose from the bed and gazed fondly at the sleeping Ev. Her full lips, her perfect body, her flaming red hair almost held him. He wavered; could he leave such a creature?

Then he thought of the long years of boredom, if he stayed, and he tiptoed quickly from the house, not seeing Ev watching him from tear-filled eyes.

He started the ship and listened to the almost-silent purr of the converters. He pressed a button and the ship rose slowly and slid quicker and quicker through the still air.

He breathed the familiar, oily aroma of a spaceship and was supremely happy. He was space-bound and free. He thought of Ev, and shrugged; just another girl. Not quite just another girl, he admitted, but not too much different than a hundred other planets—even if this *was* the

Original Home of Man, he thought, raising the ship higher into the stratosphere, as the acceleration pushed him back into his chair.

THE GIRL watched the ship dwindling, with tear-filled eyes. "Did he have to go, my father?" she asked.

"Yes, Ev," the old man sighed, "he had to go. Apparently mankind has not changed much out there. It is still impatient, restless, thoughtless, forgetful. He would never have been content to stay here and share our simple life. He thought *we* were primitive because we kept our machines underground, and wore no clothing."

"He was very like a child, wasn't he?"

"They all are; so were we, millennia ago. They are never happy *here*, when it looks so much better *there*. It is much easier to go *there*, than to fix things where they are. They climb mountains to see what is on the other side, and it's just another mountain to

climb to see what's on the other side. But still they all left Earth after the last war; they were the ones who could never fit in."

She touched her curving belly. "Do you think his child will be like him?"

"I sincerely hope not, for its sake. Did you tell him?"

"No, father; I didn't want him to stay out of any silly reason of chivalry." She stood there, small and lovely, her lips compressed to keep back the tears. Then she wailed: "but I did love him so. Must we do it?"

"Yes, my daughter, I'm afraid we must. As he himself said, if he told anyone about the beauty of this world, it would become a 'tourist resort.' That is why we put the little machine in his ship."

She watched, sobbing, as the tiny speck that was the ship exploded silently into a miniature sun, then faded from sight forever.



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THE LOST CONTINENTS OF FICTION

SPECIAL ARTICLE

by L. Sprague de Camp

(illustrated by Ed Emsh)

PEOPLE who have read my articles and listened to my speeches and lectures, over the last fifteen years, have a pretty good idea of my beliefs about the lost-continent legends of Atlantis, Mu, and the like: that Plato started the whole thing. That his "Timaios" and "Kritias" were primarily political allegories intended to show how the ideal commonwealth, which he had described in the "Republic", would work in practice—they were never meant to be taken as literally true. That he got materials for his Atlantis yarn from the literature and beliefs of his own time: the sinking of Atlantis from Thucydides' account of the inundation of the little Greek island of Atlante by an earthquake wave in 425 B.C.; the glittering city of Atlantis from the real cities of Knossos, Carthage, and Tartessos in Spain, and from Homer's fictional Scheria—the land of the Phaeacians in the "Odyssey" (which in turn was probably based upon Tartessos); the shoals west of Gibraltar from rumors circulated by the Phenicians to scare away com-

mercial competition; the theory of periodical catastrophes from Babylonian astrology; and so forth.

A lot of people of course do not agree, and the controversy will probably still be raging long after you and I have been planted. There is, however, one field in which I can meet the most ecstatic Atlantist in reconciliation—the field in which I think Plato himself meant the concept to be used: the field of fiction, of fantasy, of romance. Here the question is not: Is it objectively true? but: Has the writer so craftily contrived his illusion that it seems true while we read it?

Plato had several imitators in ancient times, such as Eudemeros and Iamboulos, both of whom wrote Utopian romances about ideal commonwealths on islands in the Indian Ocean. Both are preserved in Diodoros of Sicily, and both are perhaps based upon travellers' tales of Ceylon, which Classical geographers knew vaguely as Taprobane, and whose size, wealth, and virtuousness they much exaggerated.



Iamboulos wrote the more fantastic account. He said that when he was a commercial traveller in his youth he was captured by Ethiopians who, as part of a religious observance, set him and his companion adrift in the Arabian Sea in a small boat with provisions. After four months they reached seven wonderful islands where the people had flexible bones, and forked tongues with which they could carry on two conversations at once. Their Sun State found complete communistic equality practical because they were all exactly alike, so that everybody took turns at all the jobs in the commonwealth. When finally expelled for misbehaviour, Iamboulos sailed to India, whence he found his way home.

Curiously, no cult has ever arisen to insist that Iamboulos' Heliopolis was a real place, although the author claimed to have seen it with his own eyes. Perhaps the flexible bones and forked tongues were too much for the

speculators, though they are really no more incredible than Churchward's "gas-belts", or Madame Blavatsky's Lemurian hermaphrodites.

Utopian literature dropped out of sight with the rise of Christianity, but revived in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the works of More, Bacon, Campanella, Andrea, and Harrington. Of these, Sir Francis Bacon actually used Plato's Atlantis-concept in his "New Atlantis", which tells how, on a voyage from Peru to China, the narrator's ship was blown off course to an undiscovered South Sea island, whose turbaned people enjoyed a perfect democratic limited monarchy. These folk call their land *Bensalem* and tell how they came thither from Plato's Atlantis, which was in America. The original Atlantis, an empire stretching from Mexico to Peru, was devastated by a great but temporary flood. Bacon's Utopia is gaudy but solemn, and much more scientific than More's, with submarines,

airplanes, microphones, air-conditioning, and a great research foundation. The Bensalemites are Christians, having received the gospel miraculously from St. Bartholemew. Like Plato's "Kritias", the work is unfinished; Bacon meant to write a second part, about the laws of the perfect commonwealth, but never got around to it.

THEN ATLANTIS as a fictional concept sank beneath the waters again until 1869, with the publication of Jules Verne's "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea". In this tale the narrator and Captain Nemo leave the submarine *Nautilus* in diving-suits to walk on the bottom of the Atlantic, and presently come to where the lava flowing from a submarine volcano lights up the sea-bottom for miles around. By this light:

There indeed under my eyes, ruined, destroyed, lay a town, its roofs open to the sky, its temples fallen, its arches dislocated, its columns lying on the ground, from which one could still recognize the massive character of Tuscan architecture. Further on, some remains of a gigantic aqueduct; here the high base of an acropolis, with the floating outline of a Parthenon; there traces of a quay, as if an ancient port had formerly abutted on the borders of the ocean, and disappeared with its merchant vessels and its war-galleys. Further on again, long lines of sunken walls and broad, deserted streets—a perfect Pompeii escaped beneath the waters. Such was the sight that Captain Nemo brought before my eyes!

Where was I? Where was I? I must know at any cost. I tried to speak but Captain Nemo stopped me with a gesture, and, picking up a piece of chalk stone, advanced to a rock of black basalt, and traced the one word:

ATLANTIS

While Verne's characters simply return to their submarine and go on to other adventures (including a passage beneath the Sargasso Sea, thereby helping to launch the myth that this Sea is an impenetrable tangle of weed, full of the wrecks of old ships) Verne's successors soon found ways to bring, not merely the ruins of Atlantis, but also live Atlanteans on the stage.

More than fifty novels on the lost-

continent theme have been published in book form, plus a vast number of magazine-stories of all lengths. The motif came into common use after publication of Donnelly's "Atlantis: The Antediluvian World" and Le Plongeon's "Sacred Mysteries" and "Queen Moo and the Egyptian Sphinx" in the 1880's. The greatest outburst of such stories occurred around the turn of the century, when the interest generated by these pseudo-scientific treatises was at its height. At least sixteen such novels appeared in the decade 1896-1905, some of them now very rare works.

The stories have employed Atlantis in every conceivable manner. While in some cases the hero finds Atlantis in ruins, in others he finds it still a going concern. Descendants of the Atlanteans turn up in undiscovered Pacific islands, Yucatan, the Sahara Desert, the Arctic, the Antarctic, the bottoms of the oceans, the inside of the supposedly-hollow earth, and the planet Mars. Whereas in some the hero goes back to the Atlantis of ancient times by time-travel, dream, or "racial memory", in others the story is simply laid in ancient Atlantis without a modern tie-in. Sometimes a continent sinks; sometimes instead it rises from the deeps.

The lost continent may occupy the center of the stage, or it may play but a peripheral role, as in Gerhart Hauptmann's celebrated "Atlantis"; despite its title, this is not a lost-continent story at all, but a modern novel about a German physician's visit to America, in which Atlantis is casually alluded to. And though most of the stories deal with Plato's Atlantis, a few like G. Firth Scott's "The Last Lemurian" concern other continents.

ONE OF THE earliest products of the great outburst of fictional Atlantism was a singularly tiresome occult novel, "A Dweller on Two Planets" (1894) by Frederick Spencer Oliver

(not to be confused with his contemporary, the novelist Frederick Scott Oliver). This novel, though an egregiously bad one, is still in print, and is significant for two reasons. First, it was the start of a long line of occult Atlantis novels, most of them equally unreadable. Second, it initiated the legend of Lemurians in long white nightgowns performing mystic rites on Mount Shasta, in northern California—a legend which has been exploited ever since by cults and sensation-seeking journalists.

Oliver wrote under the name of "Phylos the Tibetan"—a most un-Tibetan-sounding name, but never mind. He told how he met his Master—a Chinese named Quong—on Mount Shasta, which was then a lot less accessible than it is now. Now it is a public camping ground, and campers wander freely all over it without meeting mystical Muvians. Anyway, Quong not only cured the narrator of his anti-Chinese prejudices, and tamed bears and pumas by words (as St. Francis was supposed to have done with a wolf), but also inducted the narrator into an order of sages who preserved the wisdom of the ancients in their Shasta headquarters.

These magi took him on a tour of the planet Venus in his spiritual body, and also taught him to remember his previous incarnations. He thus learned that when he was Zailm Numinos of Atlantis, he had risen by hard work and good luck from a poor miner's son to prince of the realm, and had done very well until he got involved with two women at once—a rash proceeding in any age. Atlantis prospered under an elective monarchy, the Rai—or emperor—being chosen by an aristocracy of priests (*Incala*) and scientists (*Xioqua*). The Altanteans were highly scientific, with aircraft (*vailxi*) and television.*

the best Atlantis novels was also one of the early ones, and also a story with occult overtones: Cutcliffe Hyne's "The Lost Continent" (1900). The "frame" of the story is the finding by two Englishmen of a bundle of waxen sheets, inscribed with Egyptian hieroglyphics, in a cave in the Canaries. The manuscript proves to be the autobiography of Deucalion, a warrior-priest and politician of old Atlantis.

As the story opens, Deucalion is recalled home from his job as governor of Yucatan. He learns that the throne of Atlantis has been usurped by the base-born adventuress Phorenice, who meets him on his arrival: a small luscious redhead riding a tame mammoth. As a result of her reckless and tyrannical rule, a revolt has flared up, and the rebels are besieging the capital city.

At a banquet, old Zaemon—the head of Deucalion's priesthood, who comes and goes as he pleases by means of his occult powers—appears to warn Phorenice to mend her ways. She defies him, and later lets Deucalion know that she intends him for her consort. Deucalion falls in love with Zaemon's daughter Nais, a rebel, but Zaemon orders Deucalion to marry Phorenice for the good of Atlantis.

Phorenice's soldiers capture Nais, and Phorenice, suspecting her love for Deucalion, orders Deucalion to bury her alive in the base of a throne to be built in a public square. Deucalion smuggles a pill—which induces indefinite sleep—to Nais in her cell, and after the burial Phorenice declares Deucalion her husband. Before venturing to enjoy his connubial privileges, however, Deucalion leads a sally against the rebels, and while chasing the routed rebel army learns that Phorenice has heard of his last tryst

*I have long wished that writers of imaginative fiction, if they must begin names with X, would drop a hint as to how they want it pronounced: KS, GZ, Z, S, SH, KH, KSH, GZH, or a Zulu tongue-click.

Dismal though this work is, one of

with Nais and wants nothing of him but his head.

Accordingly he flees to a wild, volcanic part of Atlantis and for nine years lives the simple life, dodging dinosaurs. When, at Zaemon's behest, he returns to civilization he finds that Phorenice, having trampled down all other opposition, is now besieging the sacred mountain of Deucalion's priesthood. Although Deucalion rescues and revives Nais, and takes charge of the defense, the priests are overborne by numbers. Zaemon and the other senior priests sink the continent by magic, destroying all Atlantean life except Deucalion and Nais, who are saved in an ark.

Despite the author's weakness for plesiosaurs and other anachronistic Mesozoic reptiles (which disappeared at least sixty million years before the rise of men) the novel is a competent piece of story-telling: fast, well-constructed, colorful, with the leading characters well-drawn, and occasional flashes of grim humor. There is none of the sentimentality and didacticism that spoil so many Atlantis novels; thus the author does not try to project our modern Western moral code on people of an ancient and supposedly-different culture.

DAVID M. PARRY'S well-known "Scarlet Empire" (1096) shows a quite different treatment of the Atlantis theme. The author's main purpose is not to entertain, but to ridicule socialism and the labor movement. Walker, a young socialist who has despaired of reforming the world, jumps into the ocean at Coney Island to end it all. He comes to in Atlantis, which is at the bottom of the sea under an immense crystalline dome. Having rescued him, the Atlanteans (who conveniently speak English) welcome Walker and make him a citizen.

Atlantis, however, is a socialist land where equalitarianism has been carried to the point of making everybody

wear the same garb (a red robe—hence the title), eat the same meals, and talk no more than a prescribed number of words a day. Jobs are assigned by a wheel of fortune, and marriages are arranged on the eugenic basis of producing as uniform a population as possible. People have numbers instead of names, and a quarter of the population are inspectors who spy upon the rest. Those who display individualism are locked up as "atavars". Naturally, the hero falls in love with an atavar and out of love with socialism.

The main amusement of these wretches is the Festival of Kuglum, in which wrongdoers and incurable atavars are thrust through a lock in the dome into the water outside to be devoured by the kraken, a kind of super-octopus. The hero and his girl nearly undergo that fate, but escape in a salvaged submarine, with two other Atlanteans who secretly sympathize with them. When the submarine comes opposite the theater where the Festival is taking place, the kraken grapples with it. Walker fires a torpedo which misses the monster and blows a hole in the dome, and that is the end of Atlantis.

As a story, it is so-so: characters are simple black-and-white, and the political satire is too one-sided to be interesting for long. Still, the novel is one of the earliest fictional warnings against the dangers of statism—a theme that Aldous Huxley and George Orwell have since put to such good use in their anti-Utopian novels.

Two years after "The Scarlet Empire", Richard Hatfield took the opposite point of view in his "Geyserland", which represented the Atlanteans as living a blissful life of pure ideal communism at the North Pole. The book is based upon a theory, propounded in 1852 by Alphonse-Joseph Adhemar, that from time to time the ice piles up at the poles until the earth becomes unstable and does a flip, so that the new

poles are where the equator used to be. The last of these cataclysms formed the basis for the legends of Atlantis, Noah's Flood, and so on. Not only was the theory wrong, but also the author had no notion of how to tell a story. The result is a stupendous mass of politico-economic argument thinly disguised as fiction and quite unreadable.

WORLD WAR I saw the temporary disappearance of the lost-continent theme from fiction; the motif revived in 1920 with the publication of Pierre Benoit's popular "L'Atlantide".

This story is an obvious imitation of Rider Haggard, especially of his "The Yellow God", from which several plot-elements are taken. A pair of French army officers find Atlantis in the Ahaggar Mountains of southern Algeria, the country of the Tuareg—a tall truculent Berber tribe whose men go veiled, but whose women do not. In the novel, the Ahaggar is ruled by an imperious young lady named Antinea, supposedly the name of the Tuareg's legendary matriarch, Tin Hinan.

Antinea (a typical Haggard heroine) is the last descendant of Poseidon and Kleito, and keeps a pet leopard named Hiram for a bodyguard. When Europeans wander into her reservation she makes them her lovers, and such is her fatal beauty that when she discards them they all commit suicide, or otherwise come to a bad end. Thereupon Antinea has their corpses plated with the mysterious Atlantean metal orichalc and mounted in niches, in a red marble chamber maintained for the purpose.

Though much better than some Atlantean novels, "L'Atlantide" is only moderately good as a novel. Like many French novels it plugs the theme of the world's being well lost for love, and the concept of the beautiful siren the mere sight of whom turns strong men's wills to water seems naive in these unsentimental days.

Despite its shortcomings, "L'Atlantide" has had a considerable success. It has been published twice in English—as "Atlantida" in the United States, and as "The Queen of Atlantis" in Great Britain. Moreover it has twice been made into a motion picture. About 1929 it appeared as a French silent film, and again in 1949 as United Artists' "Siren of Atlantis".

The latter unfortunately turned out to be a remarkably dull movie. The late Maria Montez was cast as Antinea, with a series of eye-filling gowns and a Spanish accent, while Jean Pierre Aumont (her real-life husband) gave a glassy-eyed performance as the hapless French officer beguiled by Antinea into murdering his best friend—a brother-officer who has antagonized the temptress by resisting her lure. Although the story has considerable cinematic possibilities, the production in this case was so hammy that the final result was unintentionally funny. The picture was such a financial disaster that the following year Senorita Montez sued the producer (a man with the Atlantean-sounding name of Nebenzal) for the unpaid balance of her salary and got a \$38,000 judgment.

Since "L'Atlantide", such books have continued to appear at the modest rate of one every year or two. They fall into several well-defined classes according to their basic plots; some for instance (like Hyne's "Lost Continent"), being romances laid in a former continent without modern characters. Thus several tales in Clark Ashton Smith's "Out of Space and Time" and "Lost Worlds" are laid in the supposed former continents of Hyperborea and Atlantis, or in the future continent Zothique. (Rhymes with "so bleak".) These stories carry on the peculiar type or horror-fantasy tradition made popular by H. P. Lovecraft. Although some object to their heavily euphuistic style, based on Poe and Dunsany, I for one find them highly entertaining.

THE LATE Robert E. Howard presented a somewhat similar picture of human prehistory in his Kull and Conan stories, but relied more on swashbuckling swordplay and less on sinister sorceries for his excitement. The three Kull stories are straight Atlantean; the twenty Conan stories are laid in Howard's imagined post-Atlantean—but still prehistoric—"Hyborean Age". The longest of the Conan stories, originally published as a serial, "The Hour of the Dragon", (in *Weird Tales*, December 1935—April 1936) came out as a book, "Conan the Conqueror", in 1950, and the volumes "The Sword of Conan" and "King Conan" followed. Two or three more are promised.

Despite obvious faults and crudities, these tales possess an amazing vitality. Howard's work proves Bernard DeVoto's theory that the one absolute essential for successful fiction is neither keen observation, human sympathy, painstaking research, nor technical skill, useful as all those are. It is the ability to visualize one's setting, characters, and events so intensely and vividly that the reader is forced to share in that act of imagination. Hence, although I admit that Howard's heroes are overgrown juvenile delinquents, his settings a riot of anachronisms, and his plots a tissue of strained coincidences, I have still read every one of the darned things at least three times. There's something about them that gets you.

One of the better-known books in this group of "straight" Atlantean novels is Lillian Elizabeth Roy's "The Prince of Atlantis" (1929) which, like Oliver's novel, presents a vaguely Theosophical view of the lost Atlantic continent. This unbearably dull and amateurish story tells how Atlantis, by lowering its immigration barriers, let in a lot of wicked pagan idolaters who corrupted the official religion, the Law of One, whose devotees are called Templars. The Master Qoka warns the re-

maining Templars to flee the continent when it is due to be dunked for its sins. There is also a tedious intrigue involving King Atlas, his mistress Lias, his son Atlan (the hero), the sorcerer Ritano, and others. The author even uses the ancient gag of swapping a royal baby for a commoner.

Within the last decade, two very similar occult-Atlantis novels have appeared. Marjorie Livingston's "Island Sonata", while much more literate than the Roy book, is almost as dull.

Much more successful is Phyllis Cradock's "Gateway to Remembrance", which, like the two previously-described novels, tells how Atlantis fell when her people deserted the austere True Faith (a glorified Theosophical Spiritualism) for materialistic beliefs and hedonistic practices. The heroine Clio, daughter of the last Atlantean king and betrothed of Porlas (one of the seven elected Adjudicators who now rule the land) falls in love with Divros, a leader of the atheistic Emancipates. She runs off to live in sin with Divros, while her fiancé is busy stamping out a depraved and orgiastic heretical cult that has sprung off from the state religion, and disaster follows. Though the story is slow at the start, very feminine in outlook, and overwritten with beautiful prose, and though its solemn occult premises may repel the non-believer, I cannot help admitting that I found it a skillfully wrought and absorbing narrative.

If these occult-Atlantist novels have any moral, it would seem to be that religious liberty is evil, and that the ideal state would be a priestly dictatorship with a Yogi or Theosophist at its head.

THEN THERE are the stories wherein, as in the novels of Parry and Benoit, a modern character finds Atlantis flourishing at the bottom of the ocean, or elsewhere. Conan Doyle, for instance, exploited this idea in "The

Maracot Deep", originally run as a serial in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1928, and subsequently published as a book with several of his shorter science-fiction stories to pad it out. This tale presents the Spiritualist version of Atlantis.

The narrator, Headley, sets out on a Bathysphere expedition with Professor Maracot and the American mechanic, Scanlan. When they are suspended over an abyss in the Atlantic, the Maracot Deep, a gigantic crustacean snips the cable and down they go to the bottom. Atlanteans in diving-suits rescue them and take them to their submarine city.

It transpires that, when the time neared for Atlantis to be sunk for its wickedness, the virtuous leader Warda built a waterproof building in which he collected his followers. Now there are thousands of them, dwelling in their suboceanic warren and getting their living by hunting and farming on the ocean-bottom. After minor adventures, the surface-men fall afoul of a demon, Baal-Seepa, who means to destroy Atlantis. Maracot, with the help of the spirit of Warda, exorcizes the evil spirit, and all ends happily.

The story is very poor Doyle, with a thin plot, flagrant scientific blunders, a big dose of Spiritualist propaganda, and no characters of the stature of the immortal Holmes or Challenger.

Among the better novels of this group are "The Sunken World" by Stanton J. Coblenz and "They Found Atlantis" by Dennis Wheatley. The Coblenz book appeared in magazine form (in *Amazing Stories quarterly*, Summer 1928) was subsequently reprinted, and was finally published as a book in 1948, slightly reedited to bring it up to date.

This story uses the undersea-crystal-dome concept of "The Scarlet Empire". An American submarine, crippled by a German submarine, sinks to the bottom of the Atlantic and is sucked into the inlet of the Salt River of Atlantis.

The narrator, Ensign Harkness, finds that he can talk to the Atlanteans because he was a teacher of Greek in civilian life, and the Atlanteans speak an archaic Greek dialect. They are handsome, long-lived vegetarians and eugenists, whose society is a Utopian communism without money; officials are chosen by competitive examination, and careers assigned by a committee of personnel experts.

Harkness learns that the ancient Atlanteans, disgusted with the way other nations were developing, built the dome over their island and then caused the island to sink by exploding atomic bombs under the ocean bed. He is assigned the task of writing a History of the Upper World, which when published so horrifies the Atlanteans that a movement for reestablishing contact with the Upper World is nipped in the bud. Harkness marries an Atlantean woman, Aelios, and prepares to spend the rest of his life there.

Then, however, it transpires that when the submarine was drawn into the inlet it bumped against the dome and cracked the glass. Although the crack has been patched, the patch gives way and water pours into Atlantis faster than the atomic pumps can force it out again. The Atlanteans send Harkness and his bride in one of their own submarines to ask help of the upper nations, but by the time a rescue party reaches Atlantis, the dome is entirely filled.

While not unreadable, the story somehow lacks vitality. The writing is mediocre and the author seems to know little of Navy life. Moreover it suffers from the fault of many Utopian novels, in so exaggerating the faults of modern Western civilization, and so laboring the contrast with an ideal society from which all these evils have been banished by the author's fiat, that the contest between them is a mere set-up and about as interesting as most setups.

WHEATLEY'S "They Found Atlantis" (1936) uses the bathysphere, the submarine-Atlantis, and the Utopian-communism theme. A Dr. Tisch persuades the American heiress, Camilla Hart, to finance his Atlantean expedition. She brings along a group of her friends, including three suitors, but when they get to sea a gang of criminals takes over the ship in an attempt to extort Camilla's fortune from her. The gangsters, however, let the prisoners proceed with their underwater exploration.

A warship comes to the rescue just as the whole party is down on a dive, and in the ensuing fracas the bathysphere cable is broken. They sink to the bottom and are sucked into the Atlanteans' waterworks. Here they fight a horde of sub-men, who live in tunnels and feed on the fish drawn into the pumping system. Escaping these, they win their way to Atlantis proper, an island in a lake in a huge illuminated cave.

There are just twelve Atlanteans, six men and six women, who lead a lotus-eater's life, making love, working communally, and sleeping for days at a time while they send their souls to explore the upper world. They are descended from the few Atlanteans who survived the submergence by being in watertight underground chambers, and the sub-men are an artificial creation of Atlantean sorcerers. (These wicked Atlanteans appear lurking in Antarctica in another of Mr. Wheatley's adventure-novels, "The Man Who Missed the War".)

The Atlanteans welcome the explorers, and all goes well until one of Camilla's suitors—a worthless movie-actor—unintentionally kills Tisch in a brawl. The peaceful Atlanteans are so horrified that they expel the party. After more escapes from the sub-men the travelers reach the surface on the island of Pico in the Azores, but are never able to find the tunnel-entrance again. While laden with

cliches, and some weird British ideas of American underworld slang, the novel does hold the attention during passages of fast action.

Stanley Mullen's recent "Kinsmen of the Dragon" may also be classed with these stories of a modern Atlantis. This is a long, lively, and well-executed piece of highly-readable hokum that employs practically every known science-fiction cliché: Atlantis, Welch mythology, sinister cults, parallel worlds, the atomic doom, the hollow earth, a race of lizard-men. . . . The total effect is about what you would get if Sax Rohmer and the late Abraham Merritt collaborated on a rewrite of Howard's "Skull Face". But, of its kind, it is good.

IN ANOTHER sizeable group of stories a modern hero visits ancient Atlantis, or its like, by some pseudo-scientific gimmick. Thus, for instance, in Nelson Bond's "Exiles of Time" a whole group of modern characters is transported by time-machine to Mu, just as that continent is about to be destroyed by a comet.

The best story in this group is perhaps J. Leslie Mitchell's "Three Go Back" (1932), reprinted as a *Galaxy* paper-bound novel. Mr. Mitchell was beating the drums for the more irrational varieties of pacifism, diffusionism, and a naively-idealistic view of primitive life *a la* Jean Jacques Rousseau, but the story is so well written that you don't mind. A trio of modern characters, flying the Atlantic, runs into a time-warp that puts them back into a stone-age Atlantis, where they become involved in a conflict between godlike Cro-Magnon men and horrible Neanderthals; eventually the two survivors get back to their own time, resolved to carry on a crusade against warmongers.

In addition to the socialist, pacifist, and other aspects of the lost-continent theme, Francis Ashton used Hoerbiger's Cosmic Ice Theory as the basis

for another pair of lost-continent novels of this class. Hans Hoerbiger's was an Austrian engineer who, in the early decades of this century, advanced an eccentric cosmogony which in many ways anticipated Velikovski's colliding comets—and which is just as ridiculous, from any serious scientific point of view.

In Ashton's "The Breaking of the Seals" (1946) the young Englishman Melville is persuaded by the psychoanalyst Kurdt to undertake an experiment. After psychoanalysis and yogic exercises, Kurdt puts Melville into a trance wherein he relives the life of Maht, a young warrior of the city of Mahbahste, on a continent somewhere in the Atlantic. The Mahbahsteans worship Bahste, the satellite of the earth preceding the present moon, which has come so close that it takes up much of the sky and goes around so fast that it eclipses the sun thrice a day. The plots, escapes, the battles of Maht's active life are interrupted by the breakup of Bahste. The pieces shower down upon the earth; Maht's continent is submerged; and Maht and his girl escape in an ark built by the patriarch Nodah.

The same author's "Alas, That Great City" deals with the next phase of Hoerbiger's cosmogony, when the present moon was captured by the earth. Jonathan Grant agrees to sail an unknown man, Allanson, to a spot in the Atlantic on a certain date in his small sailing-yacht. He is disconcerted when his passenger turns out to be a girl, Joyce Allanson, who explains that her father can't come. The first hundred pages deal amusingly with the poor girl's effort to learn enough seamanship to please her skipper, who takes a dour and hypercritical view of the project. Then at the designated spot a huge wave dismasts and nearly sinks them. While waiting for his head to emerge, Grant (like Melville), relives the life of a forebear—Larentzal, a young-man-about-Atlantis.

Larentzal and his sweetheart Cleoli (who resembles Joyce) are involved in a plot against the wicked Queen Nethali, who misrules Atlantis while her husband, King Ramanzal, is away fighting. The plot fails when Larentzal, instead of assassinating Nethali, is seduced by her and made a male concubine. When Ramanzal returns, Larentzal is saved from the king's vengeance by an earthquake caused by the approach of our present moon. As the continent sinks, Larentzal and Cleoli escape in a boat, but are overwhelmed by an earthquake wave and presumably drowned. The story ends with Grant, half drowned himself, pumping the water out of Joyce (whom he has come to love) and learning that he has proved her father's theories of "collective unconscious" and "universal mind".

While not really bad, these stories suffer from sentimentality and bad editing, and their climaxes are drawn out to inordinate length.

A NUMBER of lost-continent stories have brought a single Atlantean survivor, or a small group of them, down to the present. Thus G. C. Foster's "The Lost Garden" (1930) is an amiable spoof about a small group of Atlanteans made quasi-immortal by On-Ra, the High Priest of Poseidon. He and they survive the submergence and live adventurous lives through all ages down to the present; On-Ra for instance is an Anglican bishop at the end of the story. The most amusing passage is that in which the ancient Atlanteans fall to arguing whether the legendary Lemuria ever existed, using the arguments now employed for and against Atlantis.

Again, Owen Rutter's "The Monster of Mu" (1932) sends a party of treasure-hunters to an island near Easter Island in the Pacific, where the white priests of Mu reign over the last remnant of their lost continent. They are immortal, but since women are abso-

lutely forbidden on the island they decide that the heroine must be tied to the rocks to be sacrificed like Andromeda to the monster, a reptilian creature like a blind plesionaur. While straight adventure-fiction of no great stature, the story is good for an evening's light entertainment.

In addition, a group of novels deal with an imagined modern catastrophe of the sort that supposedly sank Atlantis. Thus the novels "Deluge" (1928) and its sequel "Dawn" (1929) by S. Fowler Wright (a skilled novelist of great power, but another Rousseauan primitivist tell of a catastrophe that submerges much of the world's present land, including most of the British Isles. The hero, an English lawyer, takes command of the few British survivors (mostly coal-miners) and gradually brings order out of chaos.

Karl zu Eulenburg's "Die Brunnen der Grossen Tiefe" ("The Fountains of the Great Deep", 1926) takes another tack: a passenger-liner is stranded on Atlantis when that lost land rises to the surface. Some of the people go exploring, and find an Atlantean museum full of mounted dinosaurs and other extinct animals. When a lady playfully spins a wheel the beasts come to life—for, it seems, they were not stuffed, only paralyzed.

The most impressive novels of this group, however, are two stories by Francis H. Sibson that also use the sinking-continent theme in reverse. In "The Survivors" (1932) two ships are stranded on an island about the size of Greenland which suddenly appears where the Sargasso Sea is now. The passenger liner *General Longstreet* is completely wrecked, with only two survivors, while the British cruiser *Maple Leaf* comes through with a hole in her bottom but most of her complement alive. The navy people begin making plans to patch and refloat their ship, and send out an expedition to rescue the two from the *Longstreet*.

The Sequel, "The Stolen Continent"



(1934) tells what happens when American gangsters (who were at the height of their notoriety when Sibson wrote) set up a secret air-base on New Canada, as the island is called, from which they plan to bomb the Atlantic shipping-lanes to extort tribute like the Barbary pirates of old. Both stories move right along. The author can describe upheavals of nature in terms to glue the reader to his chair, and in narrating man's struggle with natural forces he is superb. Moreover he seems to know life in the British Navy from first-hand experience.

Besides the stories based upon the writings of Plato, Donnelly, Churchward, and other "orthodox" Atlanto-Lemurists, a few mention neither Atlantis nor the submergence of continents, but nevertheless deal with ultra-ancient civilizations supposed to have flourished many millenia before the beginning of recorded history. The concept plays a part in H. Rider Haggard's "She", and in Fowler Wright's "Island of Captain Sparrow" and "The Vengeance of Gwa". The same idea forms the basis of Pierrepoint B. Noyes' "Pallid Giant" (1927; republished in 1946 as "Gentlemen: You Are Mad!") This last novel comprises a warning against armament-races. A group of modern men find records in France of a pre-Crop-Magnon civilization that came to an end when scientists discovered a death-ray, and the warring powers of that time all but wiped out the human race with it.

THE BEST of this lot might be "Out of the Silence" (1927) by the Australian writer Erle Cox. An Australian

farmer, Dundas, while digging on his farm, uncovers an enormous time-capsule. Inside is a museum of the science of a vanished civilization and a beautiful woman asleep, with directions for awakening her. Dundas does so. The woman, Earani, explains that she was entombed twenty-seven million years before when her civilization was about to be wiped out by a convulsion of nature. Now she proposes to remake the world according to her own drastic ideas, which her super-scientific powers will easily enable her to carry out. She will begin by exterminating over half the world's population—all the "colored" peoples, whom she (and apparently the author) consider biologically inferior.

Although she makes Dundas her compliant slave, his friend Dr. Barry, who helped to revive Earani, breaks his oath of secrecy and goes to Melbourne

to warn the Prime Minister of this menace. They have agreed that assassination is their only hope and the Minister is checking his revolver when Earani appears, disarms him by her mental powers, and warns both that any further interference will mean instant death...

It is a well-written tale that grips the attention partly because it presents, not merely the conventional struggle between good and evil, but the more interesting conflict between two different and incompatible ideas of good.

Nor does this survey exhaust the uses to which the lost-continent theme has been put in fiction. Abraham Merritt's "Creep, Shadow" deals with the legend of the sunken Breton city of Ys, and its profligate princess Dahut, while A. E. Van Vogt's "Book of [Turn To Page 95]

They were safe under the bubble, but the outside world was cut off completely. But what bothered Rosie was the mystery of where Tessie had gotten a new dress, when everyone else was in rags.

Here's a sly and sardonic novelet,

ROSIE LIVED IN A BUBBLE

by Monroe Schere

Veteran science-fictionists will remember M. Schere as author of such irreverent tales as "Let Cymbals Ring" and "Anachronistic Optics". But old and new readers will welcome his return.



Watch for the August

**FUTURE
SCIENCE FICTION**

Give him liquor, and old Norton would tell you a story too unbelievable to be true, and too credible to doubt . . .

FIVE SCOTCH STORY

by Irving Cox, Jr.

HE WAS A seedy, bleary-eyed old man. I met him in Casey's bar, out on Station 7—the big recreation post fixed in an orbit just beyond the ring of Saturn. He told me his name was Ralph Norton, said it with a sort of pride, as if the name should mean something to me. It didn't. but I bought him a drink anyway. It was Wednesday night and Casey's was dead; the tourist crowds don't show up until the weekends.

Norton looked the part of a typical station bum. Older than most—in his eighties, I'd have guessed—too old to be so far from earth. Maybe he didn't have the cash to buy his passage home; more likely, he didn't want to go. Space gets in the blood of the old-timers, and they hang around the stations cadging drinks and handouts until they drop.

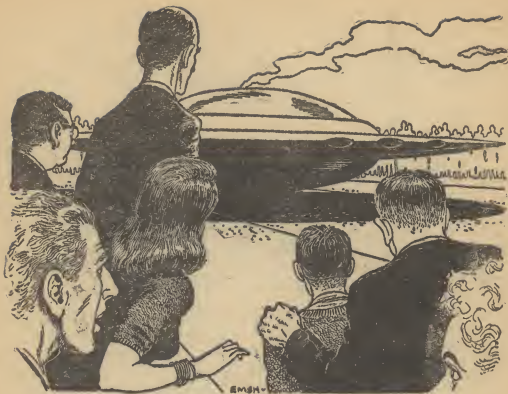
The station bums always have a

stock of stories to tell, the universal media of exchange by which they pay for their handouts. I had half an hour to kill before I had to board the earth liner, so I pumped Norton full of volatile Martian scotch and let him talk.

We had a table in the Star-way, where we were able to look through the mica walls and ceiling on the busy flight platform, and see the vast canopy of the heavens, sprinkled with infinite suns. Norton gulped his first drink hungrily. For more than a minute he sat glowering at the scurrying figures of the freight handlers and the field technicians, moving in their clumsy space suits on the flight platform.

He said softly, "None of this should be happening. Sometimes I wonder if any of this is actually real. It shouldn't be, you know; the beginning was a fake."

That was the usual teaser—to get me



(illustrated by Ed Emsh)

interested in his story, so I'd be willing to fork out for another drink. As the station bums' stories go, Norton's looked like a dilly. I wondered how he'd work it into any sort of acceptable logic. That's an unwritten part of the storyteller's code: the story must be conceivably possible. No fantasy; no supernatural; none of the absurd distortions that used to pass for science-fiction.

But Norton had made me curious; I bought him another drink. He gulped that just as he had the first one. "You're a traveling man?" he asked, peering at me closely in the dim light.

"Yes, I'm on the road for Cranston Novelties," I told him. "This is my first run out to the space stations; the luxury hotels use a lot of our stuff to entertain the tourists."

"After tonight," Norton said thinly, "you'll have a new job—keeping the secret, the way I have. There aren't

many people who know; maybe half a dozen—or maybe I'm the only one left. And we wouldn't want it to die out altogether, would we?" He touched me with his gnarled hand, his fingers trembling. His pale eyes glittered for a moment with the reflected light of the stars. "You'll curse me for telling you; you'll try to believe it isn't true. Later, you'll want to tell other people, but you won't. Even if this—" Norton waved toward the men on the flight platform. "Even if this is a kind of fantasy built on nothing more substantial than faith, you won't have the courage to pull it apart."

ALL THIS talk was still a part of Norton's buildup, I thought; but somehow it made me feel acutely uncomfortable. I asked, "If your secret is so destructive, why pass it on to me?"

"The person doesn't matter. You

just happen to be the first man I met when I came from the doc's. I'm dying; I've a week left—maybe not that long. I don't want the secret to die with me."

"How do you know you can trust me to keep it?"

He laughed. "It isn't a question of trust; you'll keep it, all right. Even if our world is scientifically impossible, you won't want to lose it; and it'll be a long time before you really believe what I'm going to tell you. There is proof of a sort: a picture in an old magazine; the germ of the idea is an old story. You'll find it in time; you won't be able to help yourself."

He paused significantly; I knew he wanted another drink. This one he sipped slowly, with his tired eyes fixed on the stars. "You're too young to have seen the landing," he said. "But you've seen the films, I dare say; and in school you've read about what the world was like before. A miserable, cluttered planet, divided by war and tormented with fear. For many people, science was a synonym for terror; the scientists had discovered the power locked in the atom, but they had developed it almost exclusively as an instrument of war. And war was the heart of our fear. It might come at any time, and when it did, it would be suicide."

"Then one summer afternoon a flying disc appeared over Los Angeles. For years, half-witted neurotics had talked about seeing the things—saucer stories were a sort of popular madness—but this one was real. For two hours the disc hovered over the city. Time enough for all the news services to have the story, and for it to become headline news from Frisco to Moscow. That was important; publicity was the key to the whole situation. At dusk, while a dense mob watched, the disc settled in for landing at the Los Angeles Municipal Airport."

Ralph Norton told the story of the

landing very much as I had read it in my history books when I was a school-boy. Norton had been an eye-witness, I gathered. There aren't many of them still around, for it happened almost sixty years ago. The disc glided to a stop on the cement runway. It was unlike any aircraft built on the Earth, yet by no means beyond our aeronautical science. The shape of the craft gave it the lift of conventionally winged planes, and it was apparently powered by a jet motor. The exhaust tubes were visible at one part of the disc.

The mob waited, silent and breathless, more than a little frightened. A corps of Marines, armed with Tommy guns and bazookas, formed a circle around the strange ship. Five minutes passed before the circular hatch swung open. People on the field expected all sorts of nightmare monsters, weird alien life which had evolved on another world. This might have been an invasion of the earth; it might have been a friendly ambassador ship. The one thing no one had anticipated was that men—ordinary earthmen—would be aboard the disc.

"There were four of them," Ralph Norton said. "They were wearing uniforms which seemed vaguely official. The insignia on the sleeves was a yellow circle surrounding the words, 'World Government, Air Fleet.' One of the strangers began to speak to us—in Russian. That nearly caused a riot; we were sure the war had started. Then another addressed us in English, and the panic subsided."

AS SOON as they saw the Los Angeles Airport, the four men in the disc knew what had happened. In simple terms, they made their first explanation to the mob; it was a favorite fantasy of science fiction turned suddenly into reality. Beyond any doubt, the landing of the disc was one of the most momentous events in the history of man. A dead-end world ended that

afternoon—a world of fear and war and atomic destruction—although no one in the crowd was aware of it.

The four men explained that they were in the experimental service of the World Government Air Fleet. They had been test-flying a disc equipped with a new form of power, a drive using a time warp by which man hoped to extend his solar frontiers outward to the stars. But something had gone wrong; instead of moving through space, the disc had gone backward in time.

The future, then—the hope and promise of tomorrow—had landed that afternoon at the Los Angeles Municipal Airport. We might have had our new world within weeks, but a major setback occurred at the very beginning. While the men were still talking, the disc caught fire. The four men slid quickly down the side of the ship, gesturing for the mob to move back. Fire trucks screamed down the runway, but they came too late. The disc exploded; not one of the essential machines aboard survived.

“And that gave us our problem,” Norton said. “We knew that space flight was possible. The men told us the enormous advantages the world would gain from exploiting the resources of the solar system. Yet we were forced to build everything from scratch; the four men—two Russians and two Americans—had presumably been expert pilots, but they hadn’t the foggiest notion how their disc had been constructed. It took us five years of concentrated research—and two hundred billion dollars—before we were able to put up our first space station in an orbit around the earth. Science is still trying to find the time warp which powered that experimental disc.”

Norton looked out at the busy flight platform and his body shook with laughter. “That time drive—it was the trick that kept us plugging away, when so much of our early work ended in failure.” He fingered his empty glass;

I knew it was time to buy him another drink.

“At the time of the landing,” Norton went on, “I was a physicist working on a government project at U.C.L.A. Some people considered me a genius of sorts; I had earned my graduate degree before I was twenty-one. That’s why I thought you might know my name. I deserve, I think, at least a footnote in the history books; I was a member of the research committee, you know. The government appointed ten of us originally to work with the four men from the disc; the research group grew to thousands before we were through.”

NORTON sighed, and toyed with his glass, not quite empty. “The initial idea, I’m sure, was for us to create a space station for military use. The people in the Pentagon had an idea that if we got one up first, we could impose our version of peace on the rest of the world. But the four men refused to cooperate on that basis; they represented a world government and they insisted that any help they had to give us had to be shared by all the world equally. We might have turned them down, but we were afraid that if we did the Russians would go ahead without us. So the research into space flight became the first project of world government. To satisfy our guests, everyone connected with the operation began to wear uniforms and circle insignia like theirs.

“The question of power for space flight inevitably involved atomic science, and within less than a year there was no such thing as an atomic secret held exclusively by any government; to make progress we had to share everything we knew. The politicians kicked up one hell of a fuss—so did the generals and the admirals—but it didn’t amount to much because the idea of conquering space had caught the popular imagination. The four men had an uncanny ability to get and keep

favorable publicity. Eighteen months after the landing, appropriations for our project were the largest items in the budgets of every nation; six months after that, we became the sole agency directing all atomic research.

"We had achieved, in actual fact, the basis for a world government. When we look back now on that period, the transition seems to have been abrupt and dramatic. Yet it really moved so slowly that most nations still maintained separate armies long after the danger of war had ceased to be a possibility.

"I worked with the committee for nearly twenty years—until long after the twelve stations were finished, and we had begun to exploit the resources of the solar system. We literally made the world of the future come true—the world the four strangers had come from. The actual creation of a united planetary government was merely a matter of form, and I understand you've done that since I've been gone."

Norton traced his finger absently around the rim of his empty glass. "I don't know when I began to suspect the truth; I'm not sure how many others have guessed the secret. Maybe no one. That's why I have to share it with you; it's too good to be lost. Someday—someday very soon—it'll be safe for you to tell it. But not quite yet; we need another generation of stability first.

"I worked very closely with the four men. There weren't many people who had that opportunity, but I was among the first ten selected for the research committee and I was more or less in on the ground floor. As the project expanded, the four strangers kept more and more to themselves until that accident—but, of course, that was part of their scheme from the beginning.

"The four men were likeable, intelligent, very easy to talk to. But what they talked about gave me my first clue to the truth. They claimed to be pilots in the space fleet of the world

government, but they had very little to say about their machines or their work—just the social system which had been developed by a united world. They sounded like sociologists, not airmen. Again and again they gave us, in thousands of news releases, the details of their visionary culture, until all the world knew it as well as we did our own—and wanted it as intensely as we wanted space flight. That inconsistency should have been enough to give the show away, yet it didn't because we were all of us dazzled by the thing they represented. Once we accepted their story at the beginning, we had to go on believing it because it gave us hope; it gave us a goal, and every man worked his heart out trying to achieve it.

"Not just space flight alone. That was merely a symbol for something larger and more important: the united fellowship of all men; the limitless frontiers of the infinite; escape from the confining rat-race of fear and suspicion. The thing that created Elizabethan England—that gave us Shakespeare and the incomparable prose of the King James Bible, the sonneteers and the gentleman pirates—that could happen again, to all of us. What man had the courage to reject such a dream because he thought it might not be true?

"For a long time an awareness of the real inconsistency was present in the back of my mind; at last, I had to face it consciously. The proposition was quite simple: here we had the spectacle of four men descending upon us from the future and reshaping our society so that their future could evolve from it logically. In other words, the future had come back to make over the past. Even if you grant the possibility of time travel, the alteration of the past is inconceivable. If the future these four men had come from had actually existed, it must have developed independently from our world as it was before they came—our world, split and divided by fear and suspicion.



Such an evolution wasn't remotely possible. Many times I tried to get the four strangers to give me a summary of the course of objective history between their time and ours. They obliged—but always with meaningless generalities. They never told me the specific and precise event which tore our old culture free from its established pattern. Obviously they couldn't tell me that, because they were themselves that event."

FOR THE first time Ralph Norton had me scared. If this were his secret, I wanted no part of it. I tried to get up from the little table crowded against the mica wall of the Star-way. Like a claw, Norton's gnarled hand closed over my wrist. "Don't run away, my friend. There's only a little more to tell. You've still plenty of time to catch the earth liner."

He sighed as I dropped reluctantly back on my chair. "I've no doubt at all that the four men staged their disastrous accident because I had become insistent that they tell me the facts of history. Maybe others had become curious about the same thing; I don't know. This secret isn't the sort of thing you readily share with others."

"You've read about the accident, of course. The four men were invited to lecture at a French university. They went in their own plane, piloting it themselves; they had always insisted on that privilege. The plane was lost somewhere over the Atlantic. Maybe the accident was faked; maybe they're still alive, somewhere on the earth. Or

perhaps they thought it necessary to kill themselves. They were like that: dedicated men, ready to risk everything to give us the world they believed in.

"Their loss actually interfered with nothing. We had three of the stations in space by that time and we were already importing the rich uranium ores from Venus. The vision of the future which the strangers had given us was almost a reality; nothing could have held it back then.

"Personally, I still had to know the truth; I couldn't allow my suspicions to die with them. After I had thought the matter through, it was absurdly easy to find out their secret."

"Easy?" I repeated hoarsely. "How?"

"Consider the facts. Given: four idealists with the perception and the imagination to dream up a scheme that would persuade the world to pull itself up by its bootstraps—four men whose minds were a happy combination of science and sociology and hope. What were they likely to have been doing to earn a living before they landed their disc at the Los Angeles Airport?"

"If they didn't really come from the future—and you haven't proved that to me," I said, "they could have been anything. Teachers, engineers—"

"You're way off. Those are practical professions. They call for hard-headed materialists, not a bold and vivid use of the imagination."

"Writers?" I ventured.

"Got it on the second try. At least one of them was; I suspect the other three, too, though I've no proof of that. But they couldn't have been prominent, or too many people might have recognized them when they landed. So I began my search for proof by reading the little magazines. I found it in an issue dated three years before the Los Angeles landing. A science-fiction magazine it was—a first story by a young writer, complete with pic-

ture of the author. The picture was poorly printed; it could have been anyone. But the story gave the whole thing away."

"The story?" I asked. "What was it about?"

"I've just told it to you, my friend."

FAR AWAY I heard the blast of the boarding siren. It was time for me to go aboard the earth liner. I stood up, pulling on the bulky pressure suit which I would have to wear when I crossed the flight platform. "What was the name of the magazine?" I asked.

Norton smiled enigmatically. "I've given you a hint; you'll have to dig the rest of it out on your own. You don't believe now; that's all right. One day you'll begin to wonder if, perhaps. I did tell you the truth. You'll start reading the old copies of the science-fiction magazines. Even if you never find the story, that'll do you good; you'll learn a lot. If science-fiction hadn't been selling the vision of a better tomorrow to young people for a generation before the disc landed, the hoax would never have been believed. Maybe it isn't four men we have to thank for giving us our new world, but all the hundreds of stories that struck the shackles of convention from the human imagination."

The second boarding siren sounded. I couldn't linger in the Star-way any longer, though I was reluctant to go. I had a feeling that Norton had more to tell me, if he would; but it would have cost me my job if I had missed the liner. I clamped down my helmet and went through the airlock to the flight platform.

I joined the line of people moving up the tube into the passenger compartment. Ten minutes later I took off my suit and fastened myself into a foam cushioned lounge chair. My seat companion was Homer Cyril—the thin, sour-faced agent who traveled for a rival novelty company. I had met him before, but we were not friends.

"Saw you talking to old Norton," Cyril said in his high, nasal voice.

"I thought I might pick up another good station bum story," I answered uncomfortably.

"Norton really knows how to tell them. Say, did he give you that super special of his—about the big secret?"

"Why—why, yes," I admitted.

"That's Norton's classic," Cyril went on. "He's the only station bum who can tell a real five scotch story. You know who Norton is, don't you? He used to write science-fiction before the arrival of the disc, and the building of the space stations, knocked that market to hell."

I shrank against the soft cushion of the lounge chair, clenching my fists around the safety straps. I felt deflated; cheated. Norton had made a fool of me. I had one flimsy compensation: apparently I wasn't his first victim. But I was a salesman, and a good one; I should have been sharp enough to see through Norton's nonsense. I tried to shrug off my sense of acute embarrassment. This was my first trip to the space stations; next time I'd know better.

Then a sudden shock rocked my mind. I remembered the inconsistency Norton had pointed out. If the four men had actually come back from the future to make over our world so it might logically develop into theirs, what had brought the future into being in the first place? The old world, trapped by the dead-end disaster of atomic war, could never have produced the transformation without the catalyst of the men from the future. If Norton hadn't told me the truth, how had it happened?

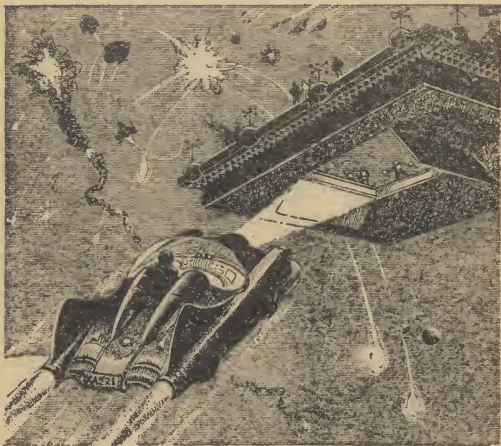
I realized then that, whether I wanted to or not, I would shortly be doing a great deal of reading in back numbers of the old science-fiction magazines.



Only machines fought the wars now; humans were not permitted to take part in them. But some, who were not entirely integrated, slipped up to the robot headquarters, outside the protection of the domes, to watch — and . . .

THE WATCHERS

by Raymond E. Banks



(illustrated by Lueros)

IT WAS about eleven o'clock at night when James Locke groaned, rolled over and suddenly sat up in bed. He listened—he heard nothing at first, and then he heard something and

knew why he was awake.

I am going up there!

The thought jerked him awake, made him as alert as if his life had been threatened. It was immediately fol-

lowed by a guilt-feeling. For a few moments he rejected the tantalizing thought, and lay down again and closed his eyes. But it was no good—he was wide awake and the insides of his hands began to sweat. There had been other sleepless nights before, and there was only one cure—

Noiselessly he slid out of bed. Beatrice, his wife, lay in integrated, blissful sleep, her round, rather good-looking face expressionless. The far-off rumblings fell dead on her ears as they would have if she'd been awake. His feeling had nothing to do with her or his life with her; it was his own and always kept inside.

He dressed in the dark, doing it crudely but not caring. Tonight he was going up there, just once, to see what it was like. He was going up there because after living thirty-two years of his life he could no longer put off the urge.

"James Locke—Watcher" slipped through his mind and he felt a faint nausea at applying the disgraceful term to himself, yet he might as well face it.

He rolled the aircar out of the garage, feeling that the sound must wake the dead, but the large apartment house he lived in remained silent and dark. The leather seat of the aircar was cold to his body and he shivered.

He swung the nose of the craft to pull free of the aircar maneuvering area and stopped a minute in surprise. The Martin's aircar was gone too; of course that could be coincidence, but you never knew who the Watchers were.

The slaphappy Martins—Watchers! Somehow it fitted, and he saw the golden-haired slip of a girl and the thin young man, many years his junior, the darlings of the apartment house both afflicted. He chuckled ironically to himself and felt better. If the kids were Watchers—

He thought of other problems once he got free of the apartment. How to get out of town—what he'd tell Bea-

trice if she woke while he was gone. But tonight was *his* night, a night for meeting and solving all problems.

The city streets were empty; all of the robots were up there, of course, and he could hear the sounds now, vague rumblings as ugly as thunder, and he could see dim flashes on the other side of the dome. The dome was up, of course, protecting the City that slept.

THERE WAS a robot policeman on duty at the gate of the City. The gate was open for emergency travel but the robot guard hovered in his patch. Not the usual trim, efficient robot at all, but an ancient robot that leaked oil and smelled of ozone. With all of the robots mobilized there could be only a half-dozen of the most antiquated left in the city.

"What is your name?"

James hesitated, peering into the dim photoelectric cells that were the police robot's eyes. His name came to his lips but he forced it back. "Mrs. Jenkins."

The picture of his fat, integrated landlady passed through his mind and a wild, small-boy desire to lie extravagantly possessed him.

The antiquated robot was unable to pierce his lie. "Where are you going, Mrs. Jenkins?"

"I'm going to meet my true-love on the meadows outside of town," he said, his lie giving a wine of elation to the adventure. Laughter tickled dangerously up his throat.

"No," said the robot. "You can't leave the City. The dome is up; there's a war on."

That sobered him. You couldn't get out just by telling a wild tale, even to an old robot like this one. "Sorry," he mumbled. "I was only kidding. My daughter over in Lawrenceville is sick; I've got to get over there tonight."

"You'd better stay in Silver Point tonight, Mrs. Jenkins."

The need to hurry before someone

else came along overwhelmed him. "I've got to go—"

"No. With the war on, it's too dangerous to travel, even close to the ground."

Fool! All Watchers had plausible stories of some emergency in order to leave town; he should've planned a plausible story. He reached out and gave the antiquated robot a shove. It went stumbling back. He felt the closed-in excitement of danger. He gunned the aircar and broke the gate before the slow-moving robot could close it. There might be an alarm over that, but it was too late to worry; after all, there were too few robot officials on duty to bother about a single human who forced his way out of the City.

Up, up, up! He felt the depressing effect of gravity as he headed for the dark, floating mass far above the dome. The Space Barge that was the headquarters for the robot forces of Silver Point.

Directly above him the battle raged. Flashes of orange and red chased across the sky. There was the hum and sing of fast-moving metal, the sound of crashes, and bright, sudden explosions when—for a second—the whole countryside blazed with light and the pieces of machine debris could be seen lazily breaking into chaos. For a moment, the awesome sight of the battle deafened him and blinded him and he felt his insides tighten; a man facing the unknown, a man frightened and suddenly eager to plunge back to the warmth and protection of the City.

But he had come this far; he must go on. Tonight, this time, he was going to settle the urge and wild desire that had preyed on his mind for so many years.

The Space Barge. He felt encouraged when he saw other human aircars parked near it. He felt elated when he recognized that of his neighbors, the Martins. He'd been right about the kids; they *were* Watchers!

He parked and went in, hesitantly. He half-expected the robots who moved in the gloomy interior to arrest him, but they paid no attention. He made his way forward to the great observation room where the force and strength of the battle burst upon him like a furious motion picture of hell.

THE ROOM was dark so that the observers could watch. High on the control bench sat the robot commander. His aides flanked him; and the automatic computers fed tapes to him, and received tapes in response, as the robot watched the battle with unblinking eyes. He recognized several of the town robots. The Mayor's robot; the Banker's robot. All the expensive robots were here doing duty as the high command for Silver Point. He looked for Robotlocke, his own robot, but knew that was foolish, because Robotlocke was only a fighter and was somewhere out there in the holocaust.

Shyly he crept among the humans who stood watching under the control bench. The Watchers!

The human faces were pale in the dim light of the room. Some glanced at him with hardened curiosity. Their amused looks said: "Here's another primitive, a so-called respectable member of society up here with the Watchers." Others glanced away as if to hide their faces from discovery. Still others paid no attention, their eyes focussed on the battle. There was Sims the shoemaker; Buck Hardy the town drunkard; and, as if to even the social scale, Mrs. Thornton, the (second) wife of the Banker.

"So you're a Watcher too, Mr. Locket!"

He turned to recognize the pleasing figure of the Martin girl. She was grinning at him.

"Well—uh—yes."

"Are you going out into it?"

Going out into—*that*?" he gulped. "No, I don't think so." A fine tracery of nerves built inside him. He didn't

really intend to go out into the battle, did he?

"Come on, Mr. Locke," said young Phil Martin, appearing beside his wife. "You can get rid of your hostilities out there; no use making the trip unless you go all the way."

"It looks dangerous," he said doubtfully.

Young Martin laughed. It was a nervous reaction too. "So dangerous it's against the law and tradition," he reminded James. "In fact, if you get hurt the people down below won't have anything to do with you; but the integrates don't even know they're alive."

Watching them, young, self-confident, laughing, James knew for the first time in his life the freedom of fatalism. They didn't have to be up here watching the robots fight the war; they didn't have to go out in it. But they wanted to go and were going. James felt a change in his breathing, drawing greater amounts of cold air into his lungs. He felt his hand that lit a cigarette shake uncontrollably.

"People are built for fear and fighting as well as love and laughing," said Donna Martin, serious, for a moment. "The integrates can sneer all they want—hurt us in our jobs, push us around down below. But we feel something up here that they can never experience—"

"To hell with speeches," said Phil. "Let's go!"

JAMES WATCHED them go with envy. He turned to Sims, the shoemaker, and found that elderly man grinning up at him. "Why don't you go out there, son? You're young enough."

James shrugged. Then he did a double-take; old Sims was holding something in his hand and eating from it.

Popcorn.

The eyes behind Sims' steel-rimmed glasses gleamed. "Lookit that. Look at that goddam heavy burn 'em out. Yeah-h-h! Come on, Silver Point!"

James felt embarrassed for him, but

the other Watchers didn't notice. In fact, encouraged by that cheer, the Watchers talked louder, a few others cheered also. But it seemed to James that Silver Point wasn't doing so well in spite of the cheers. Silver Point had a crippled heavy-fighting unit, and he could see it hang motionless in space as the Silver Point mediums and small robot fighters tried to defend it. The Africans were trying to knock out the heavy unit. And if they did that—

James tried to remember the last time the Africans had invaded Florida and held it. Taxes had gone up; food had been poor, and clothing had been of the lowest quality. The time before, it had been much better when the Europeans had held all of the Southeast United States. Except *they* had the bad habit of removing Silver Point robots to Europe—and it was hard to get a good, personal robot that would cook and take care of the house and do the monthly bills in those times.

No, freedom was the best of all. When the U. S. was on top. When the United States Counter-invasions swept out the Africans and the Europeans things got back to normal. The integrates, who ordinarily paid no attention to robot wars, seemed happier and more at ease in the allowable social practices. James looked for and found the usual poster tacked on the wall of the Space Barge.

WARNING!

It is proper to compete for money.

It is proper to compete for love.

It is proper to compete for social status.

It is expressly forbidden to enter into violence above the personal level. Wars may be fought by robots only. Those who design or wear uniforms, urge mass violence, and incite to large-scale militarism, are subject to fine and possible imprisonment.

"I hear United States robots are still holding the Southern Mediterranean Sector," Sims said to him. "If these United States boys had any sense, they'd pull back those invasion heavies from the Riviera and protect places like Silver Point here. My God, look at the age of our heavies; no wonder the Africans are beating our pants off."

There was a sudden flash of a moving vehicle close to the vision plate and James jumped. But Sims laughed. "I guess young Martin and his wife don't like the way we're getting the short end of it. I guess they'll play a little hell out there. Go it, Phil!"

James stared after the aircar that drove into the battle. "But they might be killed."

Sims snorted. "His aircar's flame-proof, ray-proof, and has two 45-50's mounted on the nose. He gets two, three robot fighters every time he goes out!"

The little aircar disappeared in the battle and then the dark African fighters closed in on one of the Silver Point mediums, and it exploded making the bright sky turn into noon-day for a moment. The Watchers groaned.

"Pull 'em back and reform your group!" yelled Sims to the robot commander above his head.

THE ROBOT staffers who were handling the battle paid no attention to the Watchers. James noticed that, long before Sims had spoken the order to pull back and reform.

"Why don't we get reinforcements from down Key West way?" he complained, crouching beside Sims and ignoring the outthrust bag of popcorn.

"Because the Africans are all over the damn coast fighting in groups like these," said Sims, pointing to a large radarscope high in the corner of the observation window. "They're not kidding this time. Last time they took over the United States clear to Chicago and held every damn bit of it for six-eight months. Your African robot is a hell of

a good fighter, and don't let 'em tell you different. I've seen 'em all. European, African, South American, even some Asians when I lived in Phoenix."

James drew a deep breath in an opening, new world. "I still don't see the purpose of all this," he said, although he already half-understood. "Why do the robots fight wars that the people—the integrates—don't even care about? There must be some human power-lust behind it." He was looking more for confirmation than information.

Sims shook his head, mouth full of popcorn. His gullet plonked and he went on. "Hasn't been a human directly involved in a war for over two hundred years. Too rough; all done by automatic machines. The initial planning of invasions, the gathering of materials, the sending out of the robot soldiers. That's why your Robotlocke disappears just when you want the hunk of junk to do something important to you."

"But the *real* purpose," insisted James.

Mrs. Thornton, the banker's wife who'd been standing impatiently by, scoffed at James' ignorance. "How else can there be a flow of raw materials?" she asked. "The last human war was just too wasteful; that's why the integrates turned war over to the machines. Instead of international trade, they gave us invasions and counterinvasions. Like when the Europeans held the US. As soon as the European robots had enough raw materials to keep the integrates of Europe happy, the robot war slowed down; the whole European invasion effort slowed down, I mean. But by then the United States robot command felt the drain of raw materials going to Europe. So they speeded up counterinvasion efforts. They drove out the Europeans, and took over the South Mediterranean, and made back what had been lost. As soon as we get our inventories built up from that invasion, the South Med-

iterraneans will drive us out; it's a barter system, that's all."

The concept staggered James. "But that means that the wars go on forever," he said, "with the idea of spreading the flow of materials around, so that all human communities can exist—"

Sims spat. "That's it, son. The integrates were damn clever. Peaceful trade is too unstable, so we have domes over the cities and robots to fight the trade wars. Keep the humans out of it. Nobody gets killed, and you live in your city and work only for love, money and status. Only trouble was—they forgot us primitives."

"Someday we're going to have real war back," breathed Mrs. Thornton, her eyes shining.

"Some day we're going to get hold of the machines and crack open the domes over the cities and go after the people," nodded Sims. "Maybe not in my lifetime or yours, but it's bound to come. War belongs to the people; our people are the smartest people in the world, and we can run things a helluva lot better than a lot of goddam robots."

Mrs. Thornton nodded her head. "The freedom to control and dominate," she breathed. "The greatest, most basic freedom of all!"

JAMES WAS still too close to integration to enter into their passionate feeling. It was a shock to find in one's own normally peaceable and reasonable makeup the taint of primitivism. To argue for it hotly and blame the integrates still seemed unlawful to him.

"Look! The Martins are in trouble!" cried Sims. "Look out, kids!"

Outside on the fringe of the battle the small, familiar aircar tore back towards the Space Barge followed by three of the African ships. Behind the group of Watchers in the Observation Room James heard the robot command buzz angrily. Warning lights shot out and flashed in space and the African

ships turned away, blinking some signal that the computing units of the Space Barge picked up—a request to keep the human Watchers clear of battle.

"Once again," droned the command robot, "it is called to the attention of the Watchers that the Robot Command forbids humans to enter battles. Battle is for robots, and those humans who break the law may be reported to the Silver Point Ethical Board for fines and possible imprisonment. Stand clear!"

The Martins' ship roared up and a door of the Barge clanged open. James followed the rush of Watchers who stood by. A couple of medical robots, that James recognized as normally doing duty as lab technicians in the local doctor's office, clattered down into the ship and lifted Phil into the Space Barge. His eyes were closed. His body was limp. James stared and shuddered. There was a big hole in the young man's side; blood was all over the aircar interior. He realized with a shock that he'd never seen a man with a hole like that in him before. The Watchers clustered around young Philip, and James could no longer see what was going on.

"But if it's forbidden to go out there," said James to one of the Watchers outside the group, "how come the medical robots are on duty here?"

"The integrates aren't dumb," said the man; "they know all about us. They figure that if we're allowed to stand around the Barge and watch, we can get rid of some of our hostilities. And they figure that if anybody goes out there and gets hurt, it's a good lesson for the rest of us. They don't care if we watch, or if a few go out and get themselves eliminated; but they won't let us fight in numbers."

The murmur from the crowd rose. "Got him!" "Look at that hole—he ain't breathing!" "Sure enough dead!"

"Glory," whispered Mrs. Thornton,

her eyes filling with tears, "he died for us; for all us men!"

Donna Martin, standing in the air-car, was shouting. "They got him, the sons! Are there any men up there? Are there any of you got guts to go out and get the bastards that did this?"

The crowd stirred and muttered, dangerous oaths issuing from beneath hostile brows, but there were no volunteers.

James felt a tickle inside. It grew fast, an ancient call to honor and glory that had throbbed in some ancestor and all the way down the line to him. He thought he'd explode inside. But instead of yelling a fierce battle cry, he shouted "Sure!" in a high, emotional voice and jumped down into the Martins' bloody air-car.

"Any more?" cried Donna. "We've got room. One to steer; two more to man the guns."

Nobody else moved.

"Cowards!" she shrieked. "Go back and choke on your goddam popcorn!"

THEY SWEEPED into battle. James felt as if he were a stranger, somehow occupying a familiar body. He felt his pulse along his throat. When he spoke, he wasn't sure whether the trembling would come out a laugh or a sob. She made him maneuver the air-car, calling out sharp commands as she bent over the guns. The face that was so young and lovely back in the City was stained with blood, and the dry lips without lipstick drew back over her white teeth. She was firing now, and the air-car bucked and reared under James' hands.

The noise beat into his soul. The terrible, cutting edge of the weapons hissed and sang all around them. So different from traffic, so different from the safety of the city. Small fighter robotcraft zoomed around them, Silver Point as well as invaders. They weaved in and out among the crush of it, Donna shooting whenever an African air craft fell across their sights.

She kept saying "sons" over and over again, sometimes with a sob.

In front of James, the thick windshield dissolved. A chance ray slithered over the lip of the air-car and lifted the cloth from his arm, scraping his flesh so that it bled in a dozen spots, as if he'd slid over gravel. His heart pounded furiously after that. So much for the Martins' vaunted ray-proof air-car; it wasn't ray-proof.

He tailed onto an African robotcraft and they followed it around. He was holding some calm, tight thing inside of him, thinking, *No matter what happens, we'll get this one, this one, this one—*

Their shots hit; the robot African craft blasted apart in front of them, the pieces seeming to flow past them and disappear. Donna gave a loud shout of triumph. James looked around grinning foolishly, suddenly aware that there was no machine greater than man, that there was no fear, hate, hostility when you had the ultimate answer in arms. The true warrior breed. He was a primitive, a warrior, a dangerous man—

Donna relaxed from the guns, turning to face him. She held up a hand; her little finger was missing. "The chances of war," she grinned. He grinned back, on a level with her hardness, shrugging off the damage to the flesh that the integrates held so inviolate.

The wine of the ultimate kill still boiled in him. He wanted to crush the girl in his arms in their triumph; he wanted to crush the surging, hate-alive body close and go roaring after the enemy, shooting and blasting and tearing them apart. He wanted to touch her at least, be with her in their moment of success.

He raised his arms for her, and—evidently filled with the same delight—she came forward for the hug of triumph.

A Silver Point ship cut across their line of flight. Apparently it was set to

fire on any ship not expressly marked "United States". It put a hole through Donna's chest about the size of a small saucer.

James sat stunned, the limp body across his lap. Rays and projectiles still cut dangerously close but he didn't notice them. He looked at the relaxed face with the dry, breath-burned lips, the small, even teeth still smiling in a wry death grimace. The golden hair, clean and attractive, stirred gently in the night breeze, futilely calling out sex, life, excitement—

He understood why men no longer fought wars.

BACK AT the Space Barge the Watchers came out to cheer them. The medical robots took the dead girl and laid her beside her husband.

Old Sims pumped his hand in delight. "You showed 'em, boy. You gave them sons a good run for a first time, but you gotta lot to learn."

Mrs. Thornton laid a fat, warm hand on his sleeve. "Go back on out there," she breathed, her eyes half-closed in some inner, mystic excitement. "Go back into that battle and make them pay for her. Make those rats pay!"

James said nothing. He stood there staring at the two still figures on the Space Barge floor. The robot command inside went on calmly fighting

the war. Old Sims ran out of advice and went back in; the crowd went back in to see the next event. Mrs. Thornton went back in; she looked disappointed when he said he wasn't going to rejoin the battle.

James got into his own aircar. The Martins lay silent, silent in the dark night with nothing to say to each other any more. Two beautiful young people with nothing more to say, or feel or do. He shuddered.

At the City gate, he brushed past the ancient robot guard. In his speed, his passage didn't even impinge on the dim faculties of the old machine and he was safely home.

After he was undressed he painted his arm with iodine and then drew a glass of water. He stood listening for a moment to the far-off sounds of the battle above the dome, in the silence of his own dark bedroom. Beatrice stirred, half-rose and looked at him. "What're you doing?"

"Just getting a drink of water."

She turned on the light, laughed sleepily. "Do it often," she said. "I've never seen you look more integrated." She flopped back down and went to sleep.

James got back into bed.



Science Fiction Index

Authors, artists, students, fans — even publishers — all of us applaud the appearance of the annual index of fantasy and science fiction magazines. As a public service to fans, and as an aid to the serious student of Science Fiction, the 1953 index, which will be the largest single-year index to date, is being published by *Destiny*. The price is 25¢, and you order your copy from Earl Kemp, 3508 Sheffield Avenue, Chicago 13, Illinois. Copies are going to be scarce in no time at all, if the demand matches those of previous years. Better order now!



Readin' and Writhin'

Book Reviews by Damon Knight, Robert W. Lowndes
and Robert A. Madle

CLOAK OF AESIR, by John W. Campbell, Jr. Shasta, 1952; 254 pp., \$3.00.

The second "Don A. Stuart" collection contains seven stories that justify the author's cheerfully-boastful introduction: every one is a landmark in science-fiction history. The germ of countless later stories are in them; indeed, it seems reasonable to doubt that science-fiction could ever have developed as it has without them; and to put it more personally, these are stories that years ago captured my sense of wonder, some part of which is still stuck there in a haze of Dold, Schneeman, and even (God help me) Binder, so that in a sense Campbell is ultimately responsible, among many other things, for me.

Most of these stories belong to what might be called the "Oh, yeah?" school of science-fiction, though they are so cloaked in the Stuart mood-writing that probably few people realized it till Campbell himself pointed it out. "Forgetfulness," for instance, is nothing at bottom but an irreverent, iconoclast's-eye view of the proposition, "Machine civilization represents progress." So is "The Machine," and "The Invaders" takes a similar look at "It would be awful if the Earth were conquered from outer space." "The Escape" is a "tragic" love story with a happy ending—and Campbell defies you to prove it isn't.

The moral, for writers so overwhelmed with the traditions of science-fiction that they carefully tread on each other's tail, is this: throw rocks.

Note: Malcom Smith's expertly air-brushed jacket design is the acme of idiotic irrelevance.

D. K.

THE COMPLETE BOOK OF OUTER SPACE. Maco Magazine Corporation or Gnome Press; take your choice; 144 pp., \$2.50.

The "factual" books about spacetravel are seeping in through every chink these days, some crammed with charts and graphs, others with bug-eyed Martians. The most curious of all, so far, is the notably misnamed "Complete Book of Outer Space."

Pictorially, it's a lovely job; it has everything from a pair of sketches of Noordung's space mirror to that photograph of Willy Ley looking pensively at a baby rocket, including astronomical photographs, stills from science-fiction motion pictures, diagrams of rocket engines and a lot of magazine covers and illustrations—some hideous trash, but most of it valuable material not easily available elsewhere.

The text is a symposium of articles and lectures by Willy Ley, Werner von Braun, Dr. Heinz Haber, Dr. Donald H. Menzel, Robert P. Haviland, James H. Wyld, Oscar Schacter, Hugo Gernsback, Dr. Leslie R. Shephard and the editor, Jeffrey Logan; nearly all of them are reprints, but, again, few had been widely available before.

For good measure, there is a page of "Space Charts and Tables"—Interplanetary Weight Chart, Space-ship Time Schedule and Temperatures of Planets in the Solar System—all extremely useful and long-needed, if accurate—and there is a glossary, pompously misnamed a "Space Travel Dictionary," which occupies two pages and gives completely false or misleading definitions of the following: aphelion, apogee, Doppler effect, Doppler transmitter, escape

velocity, exhaust velocity, explosive decomposition, gravity, perigee, perihelion, weightlessness.

Gnome Press, which published the book according to both cover and jacket, is credited on page 3 by Maco Magazine Corporation with generous cooperation in the gathering of material. Who gets credit for the snafu? D. K.

COSTIGAN'S NEEDLE, by Jerry Sohl. Rinehart, 250 pp., \$2.50.

The author of 1952's worst science-fiction novel, "The Haploids," and of a subsequent book, "The Transcendent Man," which I haven't seen, has turned out a third which isn't so bad.

The story requires you to grant only one impossibility—that, before sending a man through the eye of Costigan's Needle (a gadget which opens a doorway on Somewhere Else) nobody would think of the most elementary precaution, viz.: using the model to explore the proposed site of the full-scale Needle, making sure of ground level on the other side.

Granting this, the rest follows—the first man trips and falls through, the second does the same, the next three drop in while trying to form a human ladder (the Eye, conveniently for the plot, will accept only living substance), and so on until there is material for a couple of rival colonies on the other side.

From here, the story settles down to a pleasantly conventional and quite convincing Swiss Family Robinson idyll. It builds slowly to a genuine crisis, which the author solves ingeniously and with perfect logic, and in spite of a foolish tacked-on anticlimax, the ending is satisfying.

We have all seen much worse, and it may be that Rinehart will now be putting more than one readable book out of three into those irritatingly good bindings. D. K.

BRING THE JUBILEE, by Ward Moore. Ballantine with Farrar, Straus & Young; 194 pp., \$2.00 in boards, 35¢ paper-bound.

The fascination that the Civil War period has for many people—incomprehensible to me until I read Lord Charnwood's remarkable "Abraham Lincoln"—and Fletcher Pratt's "Ordeal by Fire"—is the chief attraction of this book, and for me it isn't enough. Working with the same speculation that Churchill once used—Lee's victory at Gettysburg—Moore has built up a painstaking and scholarly picture of the United States split into two impoverished third-rate powers, with astonishing consequences on both sides of the Atlantic: the automobile and the telephone never invented, the Napoleonic dynasty still reigning, and so on. His major conclusions are very probably sound, the minor ones are anybody's guess; the picture is convincing—

and necessarily dull, because Moore has added nothing to history-as-we-know-it but only subtracted; and the real events of 1836-1952 are incomparably more interesting, more surprising, and even more novelistic than Moore's inventions.

The characters, with only two or three minor exceptions, are wooden; the one science-fiction element, the time machine, is of 1930 *Wonder Stories* vintage; the style is literate, grammatical and stiff as a board. D. K.

THE PETRIFIED PLANET, by Fletcher Pratt, H. Beam Piper and Judith Merril. Twayne, 263 pp., \$2.95.

The publishers describe the Twayne Triplets, of which this is the first, as "the first truly new idea in twenty years of science-fiction publication." The last time anybody made a noise like that, it was about a science-fiction magazine with a comic book bound into it. I have a hunch that this one won't last long, either.

The idea looks good. A hired scientist (in this case Dr. John D. Clark), mocks up the chemistry, climatology and biochemistry of an imagined planet; his description is handed over to three writers (and may, if he's not careful, turn up in a magazine under somebody else's name), who use it as background material in three independent novellas.

The trouble is that, no matter how interesting the background may be, there's probably at most only one dramatic way of using it in a story, and when you toss it up for grabs the best thing that can happen is that one out of three writers will use it effectively. The trouble is, further, that shoehorning the postulated background into three different stories does not unify them but makes them mutually contradictory. The result is interesting in a technical sense, like "Mr. Fothergill's Plot," the outrageous volume to which about twenty writers—Chesterton was one—contributed independent versions of the same short trick-ending plot; but for people who do not care how the plumbing is put together, but only want to get a drink, it's a flat disappointment.

Fletcher Pratt's "The Long View" is a complicated story of petty politics in an absurd Scientocratic state, inhabited by long-winded puppets; it also contains one horrible blooper, which seems to be par for the author when he writes science-fiction: "...Shigemitsu's voice came out, with that tiny suggestion of hissing accent that no one of Japanese ancestry ever quite lost..." I grew up among Nisei, and can testify, if any testimony other than common sense is needed, that this is chauvinistic nonsense.

H. Beam Piper's "Uller Uprising," hands-down the best of the three stories, is excellent writing largely wasted, for my taste, on a conventional native-uprising

story—full of careful military-historical detail which I find no more bearable here than in a textbook.

Judith Merrill's "Daughter of Earth" is a truly sick-making combination of soap opera and comic book, honest ignorance, and deliberate hypocrisy. Merrill has a respectable talent and is in private life nobody's fool, and certainly nobody's weepy housefrau; I wish she would stop pretending she is.

Of the three, Pratt's and Merrill's have so flimsy a connection with Clark's background material that they could be chopped loose with a few strokes of a blue pencil. Piper uses it brilliantly, but even his story could be laid on an altogether different imaginary planet—or, for that matter, on Earth—without altering the plot a nickel's worth. D. K.

THE WORM OUROBOROS, by E. R. Eddison. Dutton, 446 pp., \$5.00.

Some works of art are too big and too strong to be crammed under any critic's reducing glass; a publishable review will not contain them. In a critical essay of 50,000 words, perhaps, you could begin to say something about "The Worm Ouroboros," but what would be the good of that?

This volume's two introductions are well enough, Orville Prescott's is scholarly and James Stephens' is a little miracle of poetic prose in its own right, but they only introduce; neither can compress the work into a thing smaller than itself, and no more can I.

I could sketch the plot, as Prescott does, though even that would take more room than any reasonable editor would allow; I could quote, as both Prescott and Stephens do, but that's like cutting off a finger of Michelangelo's "David."

I have nothing to say about this book that hasn't been said better before me, not even this: if you haven't read "The Worm," you don't know one of the greatest works of fantasy in the language. Buy it, borrow it, steal it. D. K.

(*Hmm, I think I'll have to drop in on Damon one of these days. Wonder if his copy is insured. RWL*)

MYSTERY OF THE THIRD MINE, by Robert W. Lowndes. Winston, 1953; 201 pp., \$2.00.

With a tip of my hat to George O. Smith, who started the laudable practice of an author unblushing commenting on his own work, I'll banish false modesty and state that this novel was one hell of a job, but I enjoyed doing it.

It's built on one, at least one, basic premise which I have never encountered elsewhere, though I wouldn't be rash enough to assert that no one has done it before. That is: the social effects of low gravity. I asked myself, what kind of civilization is likely to arise under such conditions?

We have been told that on Mars you

would weigh about 38% of what you weigh on Earth, and science fiction abounds with incidents where the intrepid explorers sail into the atmosphere with the greatest of ease. Now artificial gravity may be induced within the confines of a spaceship, but you can't apply artificial gravity to an entire planet—not in the visibly-probable future, at least.

All this is very fine, up to a point; beyond that point it becomes a nuisance—and when people realize that the slightest sudden move, or often what is no more than normal exertion on Earth, they are likely to start zooming upward, I think that this will effect a drastic change of habits.

Thus, my Earthmen-on-Mars had to learn to move slowly; the pace of life slowed down; and the second and third generations were brought up in an environment where living moved along at what would seem to present-day Earthmen as a very easy-going, if not lazy pace.

I further postulated that it won't be easy to get to Mars, even after the transportation problem is solved; just anyone at all won't be acceptable; the settlers there will have to be carefully selected men and women, chosen on basis of rationality and mutual compatibility as well as for specific skills that will be necessary for survival there. Individualists and glory-seekers not wanted, or admitted.

And, through long discussions with Lester del Rey, and others, I tried to determine what features of living, which we take for granted here on Earth today, will be missing in a Martian civilization, what will be present, but drastically altered, what will carry over.

These considerations were my background for a frankly mystery-adventure plot, handled within the requirements for "juvenile" publication.

How well the plot and background are worked out, how well the book reads, etc., is outside my province to comment on; all I can say here is that, while I don't think I was totally successful, I'm still not ashamed of the results—and that I think this book may be interesting to the general science-fiction reader, as well as the audience for whom it was written. I tried to make it that way. RWL

REVALUATION

In this section, from time to time, we will run commentaries on novels of yesteryear in the science-fiction and fantasy orbit, which contained germinal motifs of much that was still to come.

THE SEA LADY by H. G. Wells.

Herbert George Wells was one of the most prolific writers of all time. His many and varied literary accomplishments are recorded in the annals of literature and, many centuries hence, the works of

H. G. Wells will be "required reading" (as his writings are today) for all students of the literature of the Twentieth Century.

Wells was a keen political analyst, a utopian reformer—sometimes a bitter misanthrope but more often a spokesman for the future glory of Man. He was also a profound student of history, as his "Outline of History" has attested to millions of readers. And, of course, his political analyses, combined with his reformist tendencies, are easily recognizable in most of his works—particularly in his fantastic and science-fiction novels.

Most all connoisseurs of the science-fiction facet of literature are aware of the many basic plot-forms Wells employed (and, in many cases, originated) in order to present to the public his views of Man and the world he dominates. He wrote such utopian novels as "Men Like Gods," "Things to Come," and "The World Set Free." He wrote of the pioneer space travelers in "First Men in the Moon" and of an invasion from Mars in "The War of the Worlds." He also depicted the transposition of animal into Man ("The Island of Dr. Moreau"), the themes of invisibility and time travel ("The Invisible Man" and "The Time Machine"), the terror of a cometary collision ("In the Days of the Comet") and many others, including just about every ramification of basic science-fiction plotting.

One field which H. G. Wells did not utilize to full advantage, however, is the field of fantasy. We are aware of only one (there may be others) Wellsian novel of fantasy, "The Sea Lady."

Wells sub-titled this novel, "A Tissue of Moonshine," and he wasn't far from right. It is a fantasy pure and simple which, as indicated above, is distinctly unusual for Wells. He almost invariably loaded down his novels with profound scientific speculations and lengthy discourses on politics—the latter in a satirical vein. He does manage to get in a few barbed digs at society and tradition in this novel, too. However, it is written in a light manner—and gives one the impression that the author wasn't being quite serious.

The title of this novel has no specific connotation other than being the description of the principal character. And if there is any propaganda foisted upon the unsuspecting reader, it is the typical Wellsian propaganda: the shallowness and stupidity of Man, presented in a biting manner.

Wells wrote this novel at the turn of the century when he was busily turning out such science-fiction novels as "The Time Machine" and "The War of the Worlds." However, "The Sea Lady" never caught on with the public, and is without a doubt one of his lesser known works; it is also comparatively difficult to locate.

There are many characters in this book

—too many, in fact—and it is written in a somewhat-stilted first-person style. The person who is narrating the story has nothing to do with the continuity—he was told the story by his cousin Melville, and Melville has little to do with the action himself). At any rate, the principal characters are The Sea Lady—a mermaid who comes to Terra Firma for a very definite reason; Harry Chatteris, a young politician of the conservative party—who is, in reality, a dreamer and also The Sea Lady's "very definite reason"; Mrs. Randolph Bunting and her two daughters and two nieces. The only important one of these is Adeline Glendower who is the betrothed of Harry Chatteris; she is a staid, conservative woman—just the type of a wife for a member of the conservative party; and we can throw in "My Cousin Melville" who has narrated the story to the first person.

The Sea Lady, after being "rescued" by the Bunting household while they were taking a little morning dip, informs the Buntings that she has come to their seashore resort, after careful consideration, because she is seeking a soul which she, as an immortal, does not possess. Mrs. Bunting is overjoyed to have the mermaid with them, as the Sea Lady is well equipped with jewels and rare ornaments, with which she desires to pay for her room and board. They manage to overcome the obstacle of her tail (she is half fish, you know) by having her masquerade as an invalid in a wheelchair.

It is immediately noticeable that she pays more than casual attention to Harry Chatteris. She later admits to Melville that she came specifically to get him and induce him to return with her to the sea. It seems that she had seen him on the deck of his yacht somewhere in the Atlantic, and resolved that he was just the mortal for her. The question of whether he will become immortal is not suggested so, we assume, it isn't of paramount importance. Anyway, here the conflict arises. (A novel must have conflict, you know.) Adeline Glendower, being a woman, immediately perceives that the Sea Lady is intent on getting her scales into Harry, and becomes openly hostile toward her—much to the chagrin of Mrs. Bunting.

If we may suggest an allegor, we would say that the Sea Lady represents the ideas and ideals of a dreamer. She suggests the goal towards which some men travel in their dreamworld, but must relinquish in reality. Harry Chatteris makes the following statement, near the denouement of the novel:

I've made my choice. I've got to be a man. I've got to live a man and die a man and carry the burthen of my class and time. There it is! I've had the dream but I keep hold of reason. Here, with the flame burning I renounce it.

I make my choice.... Renunciation! Always—renunciation! That is the life for all of us. We have desires, only to deny them, senses that we all must starve. We can live only as a part of ourselves. Why should I be exempt?

But the surprising thing about the story is that Harry denies his renunciation—and accompanies the Sea Lady to her watery

habitat. Where he goes, or what ensues when and if he gets there, is left to the reader's imagination.

Naturally, this novel wasn't written from the standpoint of plausibility. But there are people like Harry Chatteris—people who dream—and, perhaps, a few of them even attain the realization of their dreams.

R. A. M.

IT SAYS HERE

(continued from page 6)

bility that the "best" may be none too good—a story which would not have been found acceptable otherwise. Since promulgating the contest virtually obligates the sponsor to publish some stories as evidence of his good faith, the end results may be rather sad.

Moreover, there is not the relative scarcity of good science-fiction writers (I said *good*, not *great*!) today that there was back in the late '20s and early '30s. The week that does not bring in a score of manuscripts from writers who have never sold up to now is a slack week indeed—and the fact that my market is more restricted than some others (we cannot consider short novels much over 20,000 words, serials, etc.) makes the competition particularly keen. Consider a minimum of 100 mss. a month from the "unknowns" and the fact that, no matter how good I could not find room for more than half a dozen, at the most, and you'll see that there's no need for extra inducements—such as prize contests—to get out the beginners' manuscripts.

John W. Campbell, Jr., put it rightly, late in the '30s (or early in the '40s) when he stated that his magazine had a running contest each and every month. Amateur or professional, they're all in the race from the moment the manuscript is opened—even if some may be pretty much left at the post. In order to "win" a newcomer doesn't have to send in a story that strikes me as being the big news of the year though, of course, this would help. But his story has to stand up with the

works of the regulars available at the same time; it has to hit me *as hard* and show some little individual touch that makes me decide to work it in, even give it priority, on a close decision as when and where it should be used.

THE SAD facts of life are that *most* of the manuscripts that come in (in any field of fiction) have to go back. Some are just hopelessly bad—the author ought to be persuaded to forget trying to write; some show the author didn't bother to learn how a manuscript should be prepared; some are written with a reasonable amount of competence, but say nothing—in any way—that has not already been said before, and better, in numerous published stories, without any question of plagiarism arising at all; some are good—but "not quite".

In an ideal world, an editor should have all the time he needs to work on, and work with the authors of, those manuscripts which get the "close but no cigar rating". In the real world, the editor has no time for tutoring—except when a few brief suggestions, which the author can and does translate into action that befits the editor's desire, result in a revised script that gets the cigar. This is rare; for the most part, the editor has to scribble a sentence or two on a rejection slip—or a small piece of paper that happens to be handy at the time—and hope that the next mss. will somehow show a mutation on the novice's part.

[Turn To Page 84]

T. D. P.

by
Paul Spencer

Would a man who tried to escape through time to a better world in the future fit into such a world?



HERE WAS a *beep-beep-beep* from the time-chamber alarm.

Oh, damn, thought Haldgren wearily; *can't they give a man a chance to catch up on his paperwork?* He pressed a button on his desk, and the

door of the time-chamber dilated. Through the opening stumbled a small man with a bulging cloth satchel on his back. His right hand clutched an archaic pistol.

"Greetings, my friend," said Haldgren with professional calmness, as the time-chamber door slid shut. The English was just a guess, but it was almost certain to bring a reply in the man's native tongue.

"Where am I?" the stranger asked, glancing around the grey, windowless room. "I mean, what year is it?"

Pleased to have guessed right on the language, Haldgren smiled and indicated the chair by his desk. "Have a seat; you're among friends, and this is March tenth, 2981."

Holstering his pistol, the man sank into the chair. His eyes met Haldgren's eagerly. "My name's Carl Cramer; I'm an electronics engineer from 1975. Made the trip in a time-travel device I've been sweating over for two years. I'm a political refugee. Can you tell me what to expect here?"

"It's my job," said Haldgren. "You're not the first refugee we've had from the past—the third this morning, in fact—and I'm here to help you. But first tell me a little more about yourself; where are you from?"

The man's eyebrows rose. "You

mean the place? Isn't this Montana?"

Haldgren gave him a smile. "No—Chicago. Your approach was observed by our system of time-radar, which detects objects approaching at an abnormal temporal rate, and you were then warped through space to the time-chamber at this immigration office. Tell me: what made you leave your own era?"

Cramer's face hardened. "I could see only two possible endings to the Twentieth Century: an Armageddon that would leave civilization in radioactive rubble, or the emergence of a single totalitarian state as world-conqueror. I wanted no part of either.

"But I knew that someday violent and increasingly authoritarian societies would pass, making for a healthy new world. I got the idea of fleeing through time, by deceleration of atomic vibrations. Slowing up my time-rate, I figured, would amount to making everything around me move faster in time, and provide an escape into the future. I constructed an electronic—"

Haldgren made a deprecatory gesture. "Don't bother with technical details; what matters is that you came in search of peace and freedom. Isn't that right?"

Cramer took off his furred cap and unzipped his leather jacket. "That's it. Don't mind if I shuck off some of these clothes, do you? I came prepared for bad luck climate-wise. Brought some food and stuff along, too, just in case."

"You show foresight," Haldgren approved. "Clothes—food—even a weapon, though you'll have no need for it here. But there's a difficulty that may not have occurred to you." *This part of the job gets harder and harder,* he thought tiredly. "Mr. Cramer," he

went on, regarding the grey metal of the far wall, "your case is by no means unusual. You come from a time when many sensitive men of science, miserable in a restrictive and warlike society, attempted flight to what they hoped would be a better future. Later, with worsening social conditions and improved temponautical techniques, the number of Temporally Displaced Persons increased. It seems to be part of human nature to think one lives in the worst of all possible worlds. Even today, when we do have a free, peaceful, and wealthy society, many people yearn for a change, and emigrate into the future. It seems there is no Golden Age."

THE TPD chuckled. "Do you expect that to intimidate me? Dissatisfaction is the source of progress; I hope never to be satisfied! But I do want freedom from tyranny and the threat of annihilation. If you have that freedom, your age is good enough for me."

With an effort, Haldgren looked the little scientist in the eye. "No doubt. But are *you* good enough for this age?"

Reddening, Cramer got to his feet. "What do you mean?"

This, thought Haldgren, is the point where I always want to offer them a drink. "Please sit down. Let's examine this reasonably." He gestured towards the chair, and Cramer, after a moment, sank down again.

"Our society works fine for us," Haldgren explained; "but how would it work for people conditioned to endless war and bitter competition? Could they adjust to it? Would they make good citizens?"

He waved an apologetic hand. "I'm not saying you wouldn't. But your standards are not ours—and our world is crowded. If we must have more people, we want people like us, and people who are socially useful. And there's a natural tendency to wonder whether men who flee from problems are likely

to be desirable citizens. Nothing personal, of course, but—"

Cramer was back on his feet, face again scarlet. "You won't have me? I suppose you think I'm some sort of barbarian!" Indeed, the TDP's hand was on the butt of his pistol, Haldgren noted, switching on the force-bubble around his desk.

"You're quite mistaken," he remonstrated. "We're not inhospitable; doubtless some of the best people of the past tried temponautic emigration. We'd be foolish to reject them and you may be one. But we must have a standard; that's just common sense.

"Now, if you'll just sit down and answer some questions, fill out some forms, we'll see what can be done. While you wait for a decision, we have very comfortable quarters for those being processed. I can't offer you a room with a view," he laughed, routinely, "since it's against protocol to tantalize refugees by a glimpse of today's world. But I'm sure your stay will be pleasant. We have—"

But the TDP was past reason. He was striding up and down, injured pride blazing in his eyes. "Do you think I'll get down on my knees and beg you people to let me exist in the same world with you? There are other eras—let me back to my machine!"

With a familiar sinking sensation, Haldgren recognized the futility of any attempt at comfort. Savagely he pressed the button that dilated the time-chamber door. "Through there," he snapped.

Then as Cramer turned, stiff-backed, and started for the time-chamber, Haldgren made a long-deferred decision. Swiftly he thrust out one hand: "Wait!" Snapping off the force-bubble, he rounded his desk and approached the TDP.

"To hell with it," he said with a new buoyancy. "Can that machine of yours carry two?"



What was the motivation for survival, and the basic cause for fighting to attain such, in these creatures?

THE SEEKER OF TITAN

by Anthony Van Riper

(illustrated by Milton Lueros)

Titan: T N (-.-) Non-directional radio-beacon station, trans. cont. 324 kc., 135.6 mc. Automatic, servo-controlled by type GS-6-33a cybernetic servomaster. Distress manual. Food, water for five men for 90 days (Terran). Service ship approx. 60 days (Terran). Standard lock combination. Spaceman's Guide, page 71 (Terran Combine Dep't/Space cr. o. 50/issue.)

THORNTON whistled a happy, soundless tune into the curved face of his helmet. He paid no attention to the blackness of space that crouched around him...in his ears was the sweet, racing beat of the Geiger, echoing the radiation from the otherwise blank cliff-face in front of him. He reached down for the shovel to knock away the snow, and...

The brain felt his presence on the otherwise-deserted satellite. A relay chuckled metallic mirth as it slid home, and a quiescent area of the brain felt the impact of pseudo-life.

Classification: Human.

Area of Study: Motivation of survival.



Brain classification: Here follows a string of digits and letters, sense-free except to the softly-glowing iridium mesh.

Another circuit was energized, and the brain began to probe Thornton's mind. Sensory perception...so. And here...yes. The neo-memory. Desertion. Flight. The station swung a recording bank into the circuit. It was ready. Gently, at first. Gently.

Now.

...shook his head to clear the mists that had swirled so briefly through his brain. The wash of darkness receded, leaving Thornton shaken. Stumbling out of a snowdrift, he looked up just in time to see the cruiser's jets wink out of sight in the black, star-studded emptiness. Slowly, precisely, he beat a demon's time with one padded gauntlet against the other, while he stared after the unseen dot that had cut him off forever from Earth.

"Damn MacMurdo...damn him!"

His voice rang hoarsely within the glassite of his helmet as he crouched on a drift of the methane snow. He'd been a fool ever to try to hook up with the likes of MacMurdo, but beggars have never been able to be choosers. With Lord knew how many millions of credits at stake, the end had justified almost any means. He'd had to get someone, anyone, and he'd drawn Sam MacMurdo. On this barren icebox that was Titan, one man couldn't work a uranium lode alone...he had to have help. And at the going price of uranium...well...

The first Titanian expedition had landed here without trouble, but they'd never been heard from again. It was the accepted theory that all three men had gone out at once, and had been caught in a methane blizzard. The theory held up when the second expedition had nearly perished that way as well. They were saved only because

the radio operator had been confined to the ship, for some reason, and was able to talk all but one of them home.

After that, the second expedition quickly set down the salient features of what they considered a worthless satellite, and hot-jetted for Earth. There were no inhabitants...only traces of the rare elements, and nobody yet had devised a gadget that used methane in carload lots.

A *RIPPLE of what might have been mirth played across the surface of the iridium mesh. Nobody thought of it as an inhabitant. Beacons were thought of only when needed. The brain briefly scanned an early memory bank.*

Life, definition of: Answered by three men who fought blindly against the thundering blizzard, and died within ten yards of the ship they sought.

Death: Defined in same manner as above.

Basic emotions: Fear and panic: Defined by five men floundering through chest-high drifts of snow; blinded senseless. (Subhead: the alleviation of same: One man, frantically cool, hunched forward over his electronic alchemy, who dragged his companions back almost by force of will alone.)

Note: The brain had found it difficult to control five at once. Conclusion, emergency measure only. But one man would reap no benefit from that conclusion, ever.

With the going price of crude ore up six hundred percent from its old level of a decade before, every ship that could lift had pushed back into space, loaded only with guts, Geigers, and hope.

As so many others had, Thornton sank every credit he possessed into the *Starbright* and her equipment. He had managed to wangle a Mark III detector for inside-ship operation; he

got enough food for a year, and air and water to match. And since one man can't possibly do it all, he got Sam MacMurdo.

MacMurdo had been openly skeptical about finding ore on Titan, but they'd done it, and Sam's eyes had glittered at the size of the strike. He'd worked like a beaver loading the ship and then, when Thornton had stepped outside to inspect another concealed vein of ore...

"And what am I left with?" Thornton asked himself. He took stock. One meal in food; twenty hours, Terran, of air; two sacks; a shovel, and a pair of snowshoes. *Some survival kit*, he thought. *I might as well use the shovel to dig a hole, and then pull it in after me.* He aimed a kick at the sacks, and fell floundering into the snow. He struggled to his feet again...and remembered.

Somewhere on Titan was a space-beacon, stocked food and air, and a transmitter to beam out a distress call. A lonely little haven, just made for a guy in his shoes. He chuckled within his helmet. Just find the station...but how?

THE BEACON was non-directional; that is, it merely sent out its automatic call of 'TN' in all directions, not in a tight beam. Thornton was stuck in a spacesuit that didn't come equipped with D-F equipment. Not only that, but he didn't have the faintest idea where on the satellite the beacon was located; he had little idea of his own location. He had no map, of course—no place to put it—and no compass. All he had was a suit radio that could pick up the signals; he sat down, and tried to think.

Item: He knew he was somewhere in the northern hemisphere of Titan, roughly about the seventieth parallel.

Item: By its nature, the station would probably be situated at one of the poles. It couldn't be planet-side,

for Saturn's bulk would effectively screen out most radio transmission. If were on the other side, planet-side would get little use from it. And it couldn't be at the equator, anyway, because axial rotation would bring it round planet-side every so often, and render it periodically useless. Therefore, it was at one of the poles—he hoped.

Which one?

Mentally he flipped a coin. North. O. K. So he'd walk north; he couldn't walk any other way, he realized. Twenty hours of air would, possibly, see him to the pole; but if he went south, it wouldn't even get him to the equator. So we walk north.

Question: Which way is that?

How the hell would I know? No compass, no D-F equipment, no... wait a minute. He turned on the suit radio and tuned it; the warning tubes hummed in his ears. His gloved hands fumbled awkwardly with the tuning knob, and he grinned as the "dah... dah dit" of the signal flooded his helmet. TN...Titan...and safety.

He reached up to the top of his helmet, found the thin, metallic spire of the antenna, and slowly, gingerly, bent it forward till it was parallel with the ground. At once the signal faded, and Thornton laughed. Good laughter. He felt relieved, for now he had a crude directional antenna.

Cautiously, he turned to his left, and the signal faded even more. He stopped and turned back to the right, and smiled as he heard the signal build again. He turned, a little at a time, until the beeping of the signal was at full strength. He began to walk, following the pointing metal finger over his head. Like a mule following a carrot, he chuckled to himself. Then he stopped short.

His antenna was directional, sure, but it was only uni-directional. He *thought* he was walking north...suppose it was south? High in the north-

ern hemisphere as he was, his life depended on his picking the short way. However, for a while, there was no telling which way to go. He had to start walking, consuming more of his precious air. He had to leave his volume set; try and tell from the build and the fade whether he was approaching the station or not.

Well, no sense standing here. If I'm wrong, I'm wrong, and I might as well die someplace else. It really doesn't matter, but I might as well try, just to pass the time.

He lifted his snowshoes and set them one ahead of the other, concentrating on his direction. Every so often he would look up, hoping to see the brilliant orange of the station, but only the stark greyness of the snow looked back. An hour went by, then two. He thought the signal was building, but he couldn't be sure; he kept walking, mechanically placing one foot in front of the other.

WHAT MAKES a man? What makes him trudge onward? What makes him put one foot in front of the other, when there is only, at best, a fifty percent chance that he will live? Logic? No. Logic would demand that he stay where he is, and await the inevitable.

Withhold.

Apply more stimulus. Make the problem, even to a man, such that he cannot hope to live.

Correlate data thus obtained.

Click.

Occasionally Thornton found himself turned, deceived by the featureless snow. He would hastily correct his course each time, cursing himself for wasting the precious air by wandering. Three hours, four. Now the signal was definitely louder; not much, but enough to be sure. Thornton grinned, and kept walking. He'd got it made.

There was no sense of day or night on the satellite, but presently Thornton made out a glow in the sky, behind him and to his left. He stopped for a break, turned to look, and saw Saturn rising majestically over the smooth horizon. The great, arching sweep of the rings was clear and brilliant against the black of space. What a sight, he thought. Even Jupiter can't compare to this. He wrenched his eyes away, and looked ahead again, hoping to see some sign of the station in the distance, but there was nothing but the grey, flat barrens.

He stepped forward, and found himself buried headfirst in the snow! He tried to get to his feet, and couldn't. He tried to see something, and couldn't do that, either. He wondered if he were dying...if his suit had been ripped by a meteor fragment. Then he was aware of the roaring in his helmet, and he knew. One of the Titanian blizzards had struck—the same thing that had killed the first expedition, and had very nearly buried the second. And he was out in it, alone.

On a satellite with very little atmosphere, there was almost nothing to stop the snow; it shrieked past his suit, lifting him and dropping him as he lay there, as if he were being shaken by some giant hand. Through his helmet he could hear the buzz-saw howl of the wind as it beat at him, only partially obscured by the constant 'TN' in his earphones. As he realized that he could still hear the signal, he calmed. He could still get there.

GROANING with the effort, Thornton heaved himself to his feet, bending double before the onslaught of the blizzard. The force of the first blasts had lessened, and he found that he could make some headway against the snowy gale. He chuckled as he saw that it was coming from the di-

rection he wanted to travel. *Trying to stop me*, he thought. *But it won't. Nothing'll stop me. It stopped the others, but it won't stop me.* He laughed. "Shouldn't laugh out loud, Thornton," he told himself; "that's a sign that you're cracking up."

"Well," he replied, "who wouldn't? But let's go...let's get on the ball here. The beacon can't be very far now...I hope." With the wind battering him, it took all his strength to put one foot ahead of the other. When it had been clear, he'd occasionally been able to advance in low bounds against the slight gravity. But now, if he didn't mold himself to the ground, he'd be blown clear around the moon in the lap of the blizzard. The wind threatened to blow him over...tried to toss him off his feet, and the driving snow blinded him, building up a rimming of methane across his helmet, which he had to keep wiping off. Even with a clear glass he couldn't see beyond the antenna's end. He kept plodding.

Six hours...seven...eight...nine. "Sit down," he said to himself, "and rest." Yeah, do that and he'd be buried within minutes. "So you want a rest, Thornton? Well, you've got to wait till you get to the beacon, or until this storm lets up." He stopped short as he realized that he was talking out loud. And when he stopped talking, he was horrified at the silence that met him; he couldn't hear the beacon!

He couldn't hear anything but the howling of the wind, and the soft "shush...shush...shush" of the driving snow. Frantically he turned his head this way and that, trying to pick up the beacon...hoping against hope that somehow he had just wandered off course, but there was only silence. He knew what had happened; the batteries had run out...exhausted themselves so gradually that he hadn't noticed them fade over the roaring of the storm. He had the irrational feel-

ing that if only the snow would let up, he could see the beacon. It had sounded awfully close the last time that he remembered hearing it.

Nine hours. That meant he had a little under eleven hours of air left. Eleven hours in which to find the beacon. And there wasn't a thing to do until the storm let up and he could see a little. He took his helmet in his gauntleted hands and sobbed.

PROBLEM established. *Await reaction of subject and correlate. Even logic must succumb to the facts now. Wait, brain, and learn what makes a man.*

He calmed a little; the calm of utter despair. *Should I drain the tanks now, he thought, or sweat it out? Should I kill myself, or let this goddam moon do it for me?*

He started to sit down, then suddenly stood up again, and began to plough doggedly ahead into the blizzard. *What the hell...the beacon's out there somewhere...I might be just fool-lucky and bump into it. I've got eleven hours to try.* He swallowed another sob that thrust itself into his throat, and concentrated on walking into the storm.

Ten hours...eleven...twelve...fourteen. Walking was automatic now...a thing he did without thought...without any conscious effort of will at all. Titan began to get less lonely: people began to walk with him.

There was the girl he'd known back on Earth; and then his mother, swaddled in a fur coat, and ironically holding out a pair of earmuffs toward him. And some of the desert men he'd known in the equatorial barrens of Mars. They all had one thing in common: the girl in her scanty swim-suit, her mother in furs, the desert men with their skin capes and heavy packs...they all wanted him to toss back his helmet, and enjoy the nice weather they were having. *Blizzard? Don't be*

silly darling...or son...or pal. Don't be silly. Toss that foolish helmet back and join us. It's wonderful.

"I can't," he screamed at them; "I can't."

Why not, darling? son? pal?

"I can't!" He shrieked at them, and tried to drive them away with flailing sweeps of his clumsy arms. "I can't!"

And they taunted him. *Why not? Why not?*

And he knew then, why not. He chuckled at them, happy that he knew the answer and they did not. "I'll tell you why not... I'll tell you..."

"I'm afraid! Damn you all to hell... I'm afraid! I don't want to throw back my helmet and die. I don't want to call death... I'll fight until I can't hold out because I'm afraid."

And Thornton lifted his foot, and pushed it forward for another step.

THE RECORDING bank had finished its job, and the memory circuits went into operation.

Area of study: Motivation of survival and basic cause for fighting to attain such, in humans.

Conclusions: Human motivation is based in fear. Even though logic states that chances for survival are so slight as to appear nil, the fear of self-destruction is so great as to obviate logic.

Fear, therefore, is an attribute of mankind which contributes to the entire organism.

Extrapolation from known facts, and conclusions: (1) Without fear, mankind would perish from the Universe; (2) Fear is good.

Recommendation: attempt to define fear. (See emotion)

Again a relay moved, and the neo-memory was withdrawn. Another set of memories was inserted to account for the man's actions, and those of his compatriot.

The brain had received what it wanted, and, though inherently emotionless, it had learned gratitude from the second expedition. A final switch drove home.

Thornton was in the middle of a step when the blizzard ceased. The surcease of pressure against him nearly made him fall. Then, as he looked up, a lash of high-intensity light from the beacon-station paled even mighty Saturn, and nearly blinded him.

A voice sounded through his ear-phones. He relaxed. MacMurdo was right on time... a dependable guy, Sam. He shambled toward the airlock of the *Starbright*. He wanted a hot cup of coffee.

There was no sound on the still, silent moon, yet from somewhere, perhaps from his imagination, Thornton heard a tiny—

Click.



TRIO

A Fable of Futurity
by Winston K. Marks



HE COCKROACH was the first to break the telepathic silence which is the rule among low-caste insects of different species.

Being of a gregarious nature, the roach had suffered most these long

months of silent durance. It was, therefore, quite natural that he should be the first to lose his reticence. He cocked an antenna to left and to right at the adjacent, copper-mesh cages and beamed, "You spider, you ant, I propose a parley."

The black widow pulsed her belly with its brilliant, red-orange figure-eight, and said nothing. The ant looked the other way but responded delicately, "To what purpose? I do not condone idle chit-chat—and you realize this is verbal miscegenation."

The roach, frankly, having no purpose other than to pass the time of day and dispel the unutterable boredom of the dreary laboratory, felt properly repulsed for his breach of etiquette and fell silent. If this were only a restaurant, or even one of the untidier human homes, he could long since have called up some company of his own species; but it was his luck to be captive in this ludicrously sterile chamber of test-tubes and microscopes.

Strangely, the ant followed up its rebuff with a further remark, still quite formal, but containing a note of practical curiosity. "If you have a plan to escape, then we might be justified in holding such a council. This inactivity is extremely trying."

"It's the loneliness that gets me," the roach said, hoping he had something going.

"I'm not in the least interested in

what gets you," the ant informed him impatiently. "Do you have a plan for escape? Put up or shut up!"

The spider broke radio silence for the first time. "Nuts!" she said. "You've never had it so good! All we want to eat, nothing to do but sleep, no natural enemies—"

"No enemies?" the roach broke in. "Are you crazy, lady? What do you call this joker in the long white coat? Maybe you enjoy having that needle sunk into you twice a day, but I don't. And look what he's done to us. What good is a roach two feet high and six feet long?"

The ant said, "We could simplify that by asking, 'what good is a roach, period,' but that won't get us anywhere. I agree that the human is our enemy."

"Nuts again," said the spider. "I'm not going to bite the hand that feeds me. Those little needle jabs don't bother a bit; in my game you get used to being stung. As long as he keeps up the supply of rats and rabbits he can sting me often as he likes."

The ant rubbed its antenna. "I have news for you that you might find distressing; the experiment is almost over. In a few days we are to be killed and pickled in a vat of formaldehyde. No more horsemeat, rabbits and honey for us."

"If we are dead," the spider pointed out logically, "then we won't miss them. Until then, eat, drink and shut up! I want to sleep."

The roach, too, scoffed at the dismal prediction. "How did you figure out this formaldehyde business? You must have been letting your honey-ration ferment."

THERE WAS a considerable silence, then the ant admitted reluctantly, "I've been probing the human's mind."

"What?" exclaimed the spider.

"What?" ejaculated the roach. "And you were reluctant to communicate with a fellow insect! Of all the hypocritical..."

"I—I don't expect you to understand," the ant replied, "but, I couldn't stand being cooped up with nothing to do; so I have busied myself studying the human culture. It was, I will grant, a most corrupting experience; you have no idea what wickedness they..."

"I don't want to hear about it," said the spider.

"I have never pretended to understand an ant's behaviour," the cockroach said, "but you can't excuse this perversion on grounds of your sacred industry. I've never heard anything so—so irregular."

The ant bristled under the opprobrium. "Either you lie, or you are entirely without race memory. The annual Council of Ten Thousand specifically appoints members of strategic species to keep mental contact with the human race. As you should very well know, we are destined to rule the earth; how else can we know when the time is ripe to attack these brutal monsters if we do not maintain contact?"

"Are you one of the appointed?" the roach demanded.

"No...but under the circumstances, my nature demands that I be useful; so I made the sacrifice. You, spider, should understand—even if the roach doesn't—since the majority of watchers appointed are spiders."

The black widow spoke from a half torpor. "Only because house-spiders are in the most strategic position to observe—not because we relish the job."

"I quite anticipated your slothful attitudes," the ant said scornfully. "I have top priority information that belongs in the hands of the Council of Ten thousand; but I knew better than



to broach the subject to a couple of belly-conscious, self-centered idiots like you two."

The gossip-loving roach sensed that the conversation, loathsome as it had been, was sinking into a morass of disagreement. "Tell us about it," he said.

"Unless you have a practical plan for escape, there is no point," the ant snapped.

"Come on," the roach wheedled; "if there is reason enough, perhaps we can dream up a plan; eh, spider?"

There was no reply from the black widow; she drowsed in a corner, having lost all interest.

UNDER THE roach's persistent pleading, the ant finally broke down. "The information I have will change history," it began, "if we can convey it to the proper authorities; it concerns this experiment.

"The greatest handicap we insects

suffer is our small size. We are infinitely better organized than the human race, and we can outbreed them a billion to one; but they hold the power inherent in their greater size."

"Nonsense," the roach argued. "Look at the elephant, the horse, and a dozen other larger creatures! Man pushes them around worse than he does us; we are only nuisances to him."

"Oh, I'll grant you that his opposing thumb and perverted brain are formidable advantages," the ant conceded. "We know now that we should have attacked centuries ago, before man developed his present science. I'll even admit that *we* might never have developed such a science if we were the dominant class. But here's my point: Now that the science does exist, we can grasp it; the only obstacle before us is our tiny size."

"Of what survival-value is science to an insect?" the roach derided.

The ant peered through the coarse mesh at him. "You are incredibly stupid, even for a cockroach. Look at yourself, six feet long; look at me, almost four feet; and the widow, here—no number of pink-faced humans could subdue her without weapons."

The roach assented, "That's for sure; but the humans do have weapons."

"And so will we," the ant pointed out, "if we break out of here with the information of how to force this remarkable growth with these glandular injections."

"You have that information?"

"Of course; it is in the mind of this scientist who keeps us captive. We are large enough to handle the hypodermics, and I have the formulae memorized so we can extract our own glandular juices. The principal ingredient is pituitary substance, and we have the whole insect and animal world to draw on. Once we have a few dozen of our species developed into useful size, the process will mount at a geo-

metic rate; in a year we can be ready to attack!"

THE PLAN sounded uncomfortably logical to the roach. Being of a non-militant nature he hedged philosophically. "What moral basis do we have for such an attack on the human race?"

The ant reacted violently to the defensive question. "The human race is the most immoral in the whole animal world. They are lustful, greedy, vicious—they kill wantonly, even their own kind. Killing for food is understandable, but they kill animals for pleasure—they call this sport. They kill insects out of sheer annoyance—and they murder each other wholesale, out of nationalistic pride—they call this war."

"You see, the laws of civilization can't be applied here; morality as we know it doesn't exist in the minds of men."

"But," the roach objected, "if we slaughter men, aren't we forsaking our own standards of morality and reducing ourselves to their level? This smacks of expediency, and justifying brutal means to a desirable end."

"It is a matter of survival," the ant explained patiently. "Man is becoming more and more intolerant of the insect population; some day he may take steps to eradicate us entirely."

The roach was impressed. "The dirty parasite!" he muttered; "he's a scourge on the face of the earth!"

"That's the spirit," the ant cried. "Now—how are we going to break out of here?"

That was the puzzler. "I could tear open this flimsy screen easily," the roach said, "if it didn't paralyze me each time I touch it."

"That's electricity," the ant said. It explained the new concept in some detail to the roach, drawing on its exhaustive store of knowledge gained from the scientist's brain.

"It's the same force that the man



carries in that prod he threatens us with, when he comes to stick the needles into us. The only time he turns off the power to the outside screen is when he holds the prod, ready to stun us."

The roach thought this over. His understanding of the electrical theory was vague, but he did grasp one important point. "You say we must be standing on the metallic floor of our cages before the power will flow through us from the cable and prod?"

"That's right," the ant said; "that way we close the circuit, and the shock stuns us."

"Then the same holds true for the walls of the cage. When we stand on the floor and touch the walls—"

"Exactly! You see," said the ant, "these scientific concepts are not too difficult to grasp, when even a cockroach can understand them."

This rankled the roach. "If you are so superior," he demanded, "then why haven't you figured out the obvious way to escape?"

"Obvious?"

"Of course. If we leap clear of the floor, we can touch the cage without being shocked; and once I get hold of that silly wire, I can rip it to shreds."

It was the ant's turn to be impressed. "Well, I'll be..."

The roach rubbed it in. "The trouble with you ants is you're too regimented; your imagination is stunted."

"Nonsense," the ant exploded. "Without my enterprise, neither of us would have gained the insight into electricity in the first place; but let's quit quibbling and break out of here."

WITHOUT ado, the ant backed up a pace and launched itself into

the air against the soft copper screening. Content to sit back and watch, the roach observed that it wasn't even necessary to tear at the wall. The ant's mighty lunge and considerable weight burst through the thin barrier, and it landed on all six on the rubber matting that formed the floor of the laboratory.

"Come on," the ant said, stepping up to the roach's cage and ripping the face of it asunder with two slashing forelegs. "We must gather up all the needles and hypodermics in the place. Those two drawers over there. You get them while I get the pituitary extracts from this cabinet."

They worked swiftly, but when they were through there was a considerable pile of supplies in the middle of the room. The ant looked at it doubtfully. "How are we going to carry all this?"

Once more the roach came through. "The spider," he said. "Let's wake her up, and she can help."

"Do you think she'll cooperate?"

"Of course, and hurry. It's feeding time; the man will be here any minute. We must be ready to destroy him."

Even as the roach spoke the slam of a car door outside the little concrete building announced the arrival of their human keeper.

The ant charged at the cell and caved in the screen. Once inside it pulled impatiently at the long, sensitive hairs on the black widow's spindly legs. "Wake up! We're getting out of here," the ant cried impatiently.

"What—what's going on?" The spider awoke, trembling with excitement.

"We've broken loose," the ant explained. "The man is coming right now; so if you don't want to be stunned silly, get out there and help us take care of him. Why don't you sting him? That will be easiest."

The widow arched through the gaping hole gingerly and looked around.

"You've practically wrecked the place. The man will be angry."

"He'll be dead if you do your part," the roach said, watching the door closely as the footsteps drew nearer.

The ant snapped, "Quit eyeing those rabbit-cages and get behind that door. When he comes in—"

THE ROACH and the ant were side by side at the pile of supplies, so it was easy. The black widow bellied down for an instant and leaped, landing astride the two of them. A pair of lightning jabs between thorax and head, and she was mistress of the situation.

Moving with haste she stuffed the limp, ungainly roach back in his cage and returned for the paralyzed ant. Although the venom had effectively reduced all physical resistance, the ant's brain sent a barrage of invective against the spider as she jammed the ant in its cage.

The key was rattling in the door, so with one longing glance at the rabbit cages, she skittered to her own cage and stepped back into it.

The door swung open, a horrified gasp emitted from it and it swung shut with a heavy bang. The key turned, and footsteps retreated heavily and rapidly.

"Now see what you've done," the ant railed. "The whole human race is alerted against us; we'll never escape."

The widow moved from her quarters again and crossed to the rabbit-hutch, where she selected two juicy specimens for her dinner.

The roach, by now, had gathered its terrified wits together and was reproaching the ant. "Another tactical blunder," he said; "if you had briefed the spider on our plan she wouldn't have fouled us up."

While the widow consumed her dinner, the roach bitterly related the wonderful plan for overthrowing the hated

human race. "If it hadn't been for your stupid actions we'd have become rulers of the world in a few years," he concluded.

The widow discarded the second furry carcass and wiped her beak delicately on a foreleg. "My mother was a delegate to the last Council of Ten Thousand," she said; "I assure you, your plan has no merit."

"How so?" the ant and roach cried together.

"For two splendid reasons," she replied with a bored air. "First, if it became known among insects how to grow to such great sizes, we should be warring among ourselves shortly. With such large bodies to feed, the world food-supply would diminish to a dangerous level; we would find ourselves in precisely the same quandry that mankind finds himself.

"Secondly, at the last Council meeting, coordinated information indicated that man is on the verge of destroying himself with one of his foolish gadgets—the hydrogen and atom bomb, I think mother said."

The roach fell silent. The ant had been a fool after all.

"But I tell you," the ant screamed with mental vibrations that ripped the ether, "if we don't escape, we will all three die in a vat of formaldehyde very soon!"

"So how will that harm my race?" the cockroach snarled in thorough disgust.

The black widow explained, "The ant is paying the penalty for unauthorized searching of man's mind; the ant has contracted man's most distressing disease. It is the disease which drove mother insane."

"How curious," the roach observed. "What do they call it?"

"It is a disease of the brain," the widow said, lowering her red-orange belly to the cool, metal floor for a nap. "They call it *fear*."

REBELLION INDICATED

by Gene L. Henderson

These natives were just too co-operative, too willing to do all the Earthman demanded. Obviously, some sort of underground activity was going on . . .



"Is something wrong, sirs?" the native inquired.

THE LAUGHTER of children at play wafted up with the scent of flowers and a warm breeze. Captain Ackley stood with his back to the room, staring moodily at the brightly-costumed inhabitants of the planet Evran as they strolled by slowly. A cough and the restless shuffling of feet finally compelled him to turn back to the head of the table. Only three others were present, the rest of the Expedition either in their barracks close by the rocket-ship, or standing guard at the ship itself.

"Well, gentlemen," his words fell heavily and out of place in the gaily decorated room. "This marks the end of our first month on Evran, and a report must be sent back to Earth."

"It's not natural," complained Tiffley, in charge of civil administration. "Everything is too perfect; it's all been too easy. The natives had a perfect system of government insofar as I could determine; yet they cheerfully accepted the reforms I felt necessary. It has all gone according to plan."

Capt. Ackley turned to the black-garbed Father O'Connor, their non-denominational chaplain. "And you, sir?"

Father O'Connor cleared his throat nervously, quietly stating, "I, too, am troubled, Captain. Although possessing a childlike faith in all-kind deity, there appear to be no places of worship. Yet, a large building was given

to me to conduct prayer-services, and now it is filled each time to overflowing. All whom I ask gladly accept the Christian faith, as we know it."

The remaining member of the Advisory board, Dr. Leaman, spoke out without waiting. His high voice piped, "No race could be as healthy as these appear to be. Tests have indicated that harmful bacteria and germs exist on the planet but there are no signs of disease or sickness. Nor do records indicate any in the past. Each man and woman, barring accident, lives out his or her full span of life—which appears to be several hundred years. However, when I decided that it would be best to spray everyone with DDT, my dispensary was practically overrun. Even those working in close contact with us seemed eager to be inoculated, although it was an entirely new experience for them."

The captain stared down at his large fists, clenching and unclenching them in the long silence. Finally he spoke.

"I think, then, that we're agreed the report must state that we expect the worst?" All heads nodded in agreement. "As military commander of the expedition, and charged with its security, I came fully prepared to forcibly establish and hold a beachhead on the planet."

He paused, then continued angrily. "Yet, what happens? Not a shot was fired, and I've been unable to find any type of a weapon that could've been used against us. There are no armed forces, or police, nor any indicated resentment against the rules and regulations placed into effect over the entire planet. All were quite necessary of course, to maintain security."

"I'm almost afraid to go to sleep at night," said Tiffley.

The captain ignored the interruption. "It's my belief that this is all part of a gigantic hoax to lull the expedition into becoming careless, then massacre us."

Father O'Connor nodded sadly. "The danger is made more so since they are physically similar to Earth people."

"I propose, then, that we summon the native-leader Ampra and inform him that we're onto the scheme. Are there any dissenting votes?"

There were none. In fact, the remaining three looked happier than they had at any time since it became apparent that the peoples of Evran were only too anxious to cooperate fully. The problem was now out in the open, and not nagging in the back of their thoughts.

AMPRA was summoned and came hurrying into the room, genial, pleasant face smiling. He was only slightly over five feet in height and, contrary to the rest of his fellow men, plump. The greater number of natives were slightly taller and thin; in fact, the Earthmen had been impressed by their birdlike qualities and attitude towards life in general.

The sight of Capt. Ackley's stern and frowning face didn't appear to dampen the native's enthusiasm. Tiffley did note—and remarked later to his fellow Board members—that a faint shadow of anxiety flashed across his face, to be hidden instantly.

"Is something wrong, sirs?" he asked.

"Nothing outwardly," the captain replied; "however, we're onto your scheme."

"My scheme?" said Ampra, smiling somewhat doubtfully, looking for a joke but sensing that was usually lacking wherever the Earthmen were concerned. "We have attempted to comply with everything you have told us; if one of my people has..."

"No," interrupted Capt. Ackley roughly. "Everything is too perfect. First, your entire race submitted to our invasion without a struggle, although you outnumber us 1000 to 1."

"But if we had resisted, some of us might have been killed. Besides, we had no weapons nor time to develop them; war vanished on our planet ages ago."

"But why should you submit to regulations and rules alien to your way of life without resentment? Nor, in spite of diligent search, have I been able to uncover any semblance of an underground resistance."

"You could not," said Ampra, smiling kindly. "We are happy; if following your rules will make Earth people happy too, then we attempt to adapt ourselves to their way. Food is plentiful; the warm breezes still blow over flowers that continue to bloom; what more could man ask?"

Father O'Connor had shifted restlessly and the native leader looked at him expectantly. "There are no sins evident," that good man accused.

"Sins?" repeated Ampra uncertainly.

"Your peoples do no moral wrong," explained the chaplain.

"The ability to commit a moral wrong would indicate an inability to adapt one's self to his fellow men and environment," pointed out Ampra. "That weakness disappeared with war."

"That, then, would hint of the presence of a strong religion—but you worship nothing but the pleasures of this life."

"Perhaps that is because we have so much longer to look forward to than you humans," smiled the native broadly.

Doctor Leaman entered the conversation suddenly. "That brings up another point," he charged. "You must have evacuated all sick or diseased peoples from this city to another; your people are impossibly healthy."

"The last known disease vanished four centuries ago," Ampra said. "It was accomplished by the release of bacteria within our bodies that com-

pletely dominate all disease-germs and destroy them completely." He looked around wonderingly at each Earthman. "Surely, with your familiarity with disease, you had wondered why none of you have been afflicted with minor ailments that were brought along in your ship?"

Members of the Board looked around at each other, suddenly remembering the lack of fevers and colds. Dr. Leaman protested vehemently, "No! A coincidence entirely. You have been lulling us into a false sense of security, so that perhaps we can be overwhelmed by an alien epidemic before which our medical science would stand helpless."

Ampra saw that the members of the Board were serious and shrugged helplessly. "But I assure you, sirs, that we have cooperated openly; it is the same in every city on Evran as it is here in our capital city."

"Your deceit will avail you nothing," said Capt. Ackley coldly. "Our first report to Earth on the progress of colonization will state that your peoples are quietly organizing for a gigantic assault on our small forces. We intend to ask for immediate reinforcements, and to double all existing watches we now maintain. I warn you, Ampra, that our weapons are the finest that Earth-science could devise and your people will be committing a worldwide suicide if they attack us."

The native shook his head sadly. "I am regretful that you could believe this," he said. "Why can't you be happy as we are? If there is anything at all that we could..."

Again he was interrupted by the captain. "I can understand you wanting us to be happy if you mean careless at the same time. We'll never be content until your people begin acting natural." He turned from the native, dismissing him with the curt words, "You may as well tell them that as soon as possible."

Ampra opened his mouth to say something but, realizing the futility of it, walked dejectedly from the room.

THE NEXT morning, before lunch, all members of the Expedition were armed and an emergency-session of the Advisory Board called.

Capt. Ackley faced the three members, exulting. "Our ultimatum to Ampra has brought them out from cover," he said happily. "One of our patrols a hundred miles from here, was fired upon by guns stolen from an armory, but fortunately there were no casualties."

"There have been repercussions in my work also," announced Father O'Connor. "This morning at prayer-services, over half of the congregation was drunk. And, so you know what they did?" he asked in an outraged tone that somehow sounded satisfied at the same time.

The others urged him to continue. "Half of them, women as well as men, removed all their clothing and paraded shamelessly before me. Several were repentant afterwards and, I believe, have already seen the error of their ways. They are really good people at heart—just like little children who must be taught right from wrong."

The captain turned to look out the window as he heard the noise of the guard being changed below. "Now that we know what we're facing, our job will be much easier," he said. "How about your administrators, Tiffley? I understand you discovered that native clerks had been sabotaging and destroying some of the files."

"Yes, sir. Fortunately it was discovered before any great harm was done. We're busy now setting up classes to teach them all the true meaning of democracy. Strange that it hadn't occurred to me before that their leader rules for life. They have no conception of voting—not even the faintest semblance of a legislative system. Our first

project will be a world-wide election at the earliest possible moment. They must be taught to accept social responsibilities."

Dr. Leaman stood up, glancing at his watch, and said, "If you'll excuse me, I must hurry to the dispensary."

"Are you ready to handle any casualties that may result from the rebellion?" asked the captain.

"Yes, sir, but right now we're devoting our full energy to study of a native afflicted with an unknown disease. One of the security-patrols discovered a group of his relatives attempting to smuggle him out into the country."

Capt. Ackley began buckling on his holster and blaster. "I believe it best that we all return to our stations," he said. He looked around, suddenly remembering, "Oh yes, has anyone seen Ampra since yesterday?"

Each shook his head in the negative.

"Good," said the captain. "It proves how right we were in suspecting him and the rest of his people. Now that he knows the cat is out of the bag, I predict we won't see him again for some time."

ACROSS the city, deep underground, another but more gay meeting was taking place. Ampra sat at the head of a heavily-laden banquet table while lilting music swirled in and around the happy assemblage.

He clapped his hands, commanding attention. "Before I forget, what is the report on our relations with the Earth people. Lindro, what is this I hear concerning your indecency in Church this morning?"

The youth thus addressed hung his head in mock shame. "It is so, sir, but I have already acknowledged my repentance to Father O'Connor—which pleased him very much."

Another made his report. "I fear that the underground movement has received a serious setback, sir. Just

prior to our meeting here, headquarters was raided by the Earthmen and some very incriminating records seized."

The rest of the reports were made rapidly, usually followed by a merry peal of laughter from all those assembled. Ampira tried to screw his face up into a look of reproach, but was unsuccessful—merely causing everyone to laugh the harder.

When he could at last command silence, Ampira called off a list of names and the men, thus designated, stepped forward.

"The revolt is progressing smoothly," he told them. "Now then, today in church I want a noisy riot to break out. Also, a group of sullen men and women will attempt to stone the Administration Building while the Board is still deliberating. Take care that none of *them* are injured, and allow the military police to capture a few of you; you may confess fully when questioned. Also, three more people must be detected stricken with a new disease. Finally, I want our assistant

administrators and clerks to resign in protest over the new taxes and regulations. Does everyone understand his mission?"

There was a babble of assent and Ampira called to one youth who appeared happy but doubtful at the same time. "I must confess," the young man told his leader, "that I fail to understand fully the need for all this deception."

"What!" exclaimed Ampira, drawing back amazed. "Surely you understand the prime requisite of our society that adaptations must be made so that all will be happy?"

The youth nodded.

"Then it becomes simple," said Ampira happily. "Our mistake at first was in complying with every demand made by the Earthmen. Each is highly specialized in his field, and was thus left with nothing to do. Now each will be able to meet and solve his own problems, and peace will again reign on Evran."



3 Out-of-this-World Short Stories

MIRROR, MIRROR

by Jerome Bixby



THE MARVELOUS MOVIE

by Robert Abernathy



ASYLUM

by Alice Bullock

*are among the many
features in the August*

**FUTURE SCIENCE
FICTION**

The editor can't be an idealist—or, rather, he can't be both an idealist and a salaried editor long. If he tries to combine the two urges, he'll manage to get out a few gems of splendid advice—and even assist a few authors along the way to arrival—before he's scuttled for missing one deadline too many. (The first one may be it, too.) There have, no doubt, been romances where an editor thus banished was adopted by the grateful author or authors in question, and spent the rest of a happy life continuing to give his services, etc.; but I've never heard of it happening in the world we live in.

From all this, it would seem that it's well-nigh impossible for a newcomer to break in, doesn't it? (Well, consider the odds against your having been born, too!) Yet, let's take a look at the scribes whose names appear on the contents page this issue.

RAYMOND E. BANKS was a "first" in the June 1953 issue of *Dynamic Science Fiction*—that was a little over a year ago. Since then, he's been seen around enough to indicate that I wasn't the only one who thought his science fiction had something worth publishing.

BARRY NELSON is a "first" in this issue; he's never sold elsewhere at all. When he sent "Earthfall" in to me, I

typed out a "close but no cigar" note, suggesting an angle for revision; he got the point.

ANTHONY VAN RIPER is here with his appearance in fiction; he had a critical article in the October 1953 issue of *Dynamic Science Fiction*—but the requirements for article-writing and fiction-writing do not dovetail very much.

GENE L. HENDERSON was a newcomer—though he'd sold once before—when I saw his "A Secondary First", which I grabbed for the November 1951 issue of *Future*.

PAUL SPENCER is a text-book editor, strolling player, and known to many fans and readers by virtue of innumerable published letters to editors. We just missed a "first" on him.

WINSTON K. MARKS, whose "So They Baked A Cake", in the January 1954 issue of *Dynamic Science Fiction*, brought forth praise, is an older hand.

BOYD ELLANBY and IRVING E. COX, JR., have both come up since 1950. Ellanby made his debut with a short story entitled "Family Tree", in the August 1952 issue of *Startling Stories*; Cox showed up in the same year, I believe.

All in all, the current type of "contest" has worked much better.



Letters

THE FIRST DOZEN by Willis Freeman

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

The holiday rush and hangovers, etc., kept me from reading your February issue until just before the May SFQ was due to appear and I picked up the new number wondering if someone had beaten me to the draw this time. Hmna, either they

To be considered for publication here, letters must be typed double-space, using only one side of the sheet.

hadn't or you decided to hold out and see if I'd get mine in, I guess. Thanks, if you were waiting for me; of course, I probably would have torn out the sheets and sent you my ratings, anyway—which would have meant my buying another copy for my files—but it's good to feel that I'm in time. (That is, I hope I'm still in time.)

Well, I'll set it up just about the way I

[Turn To Page 86]

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TEN - STORY SPORTS

SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

did for the first twelve issues of *Future*; again, I won't dwell on covers and artwork except to tell you that I liked best A. Leslie Ross' frontispiece on your August 1953 issue, with Milton Luros taking second and third place, for his covers on the August 1952 and February 1954 issues respectively. The poorest, I thought, was the one by Leo Morey, on the August 1951 issue; Jack Coggins must take the rap for second worst, and Luros didn't please me very much with his May, 1953 issue cover, either. (However, as the "best" ratings show, he comes out ahead of the game; and his general run of covers, while not always brilliant perhaps, have been pretty satisfactory.)

Now, as to the story-ratings, they'll also go as before. A (1) means tops to me, a story I feel deserves preservation in an anthology—some of these have been selected by anthologists. A (2) means not quite the best, but very good for my money; in fact, some of my selections for this spot have also pleased anthology editors. A (3) rating is still on the credit side, denoting a story I definitely enjoyed at the time, though it's doubtful that I'd re-read it. With the (4) list, I felt that these were below par, while the (5) listing indicate my feeling that you just shouldn't have taken them at all, even if you were desperate at the time.

(And, as before, I've set up three parenthesis before each title. The first shows Mr. Freeman's rating; the second indicates my own opinions, after due reflection and consideration of the readers' comments; the third is left open for you, gentle reader, to fill in yourself if you have a mind to. RWL)

(1) (1) () The Deadly Thinkers—Beyser: one of the most absorbing "thinking machine" stories I've seen.

(1) (1) () Righteous Plague—Abenrath: a real chiller.

(1) (1) () Second Dawn—Clarke: a humdinger by an uneven writer.

(1) (1) () The Shining City—Vale: a splendid characterization of the "collaborationist" psyche. What has happened to this author?

(1) (2) () Silent Partner—Lombino: with perfectly familiar materials, a surprise ending is achieved, and one with considerable impact.

(1) (2) () The Timeless One—Russell: didactic, perhaps, but a fine story.

(1) (1) () The Green Thumb—Anderson: as believable a picture as I've ever read.

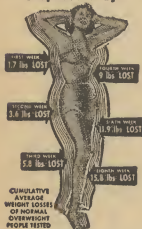
[Turn To Page 88]

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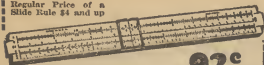
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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

(1) (2) () A Little Knowledge—Meril: not really science fiction, but I thought of it first in this "top" category.

(1) (1) () Lifework—Abernathy: this one deserves anthologization.

(1) (1) () Common Time—Blish: two of this author's finest short novelets have been inspired by your covers; this is one of them.

(1) (1) () Audience Reaction—Young: a type of science fiction that is rare these days, but which packs a wallop when done as well as this one was.

(1) (1) () A Transmissible Matter—Schmidt: there's very few so-called humorous tales in science fiction, that are really funny; this one was the exception, and takes the prize.

(2) (1) () A Matter of Frequency—Tenn: good satire, but not quite tops.

(2) (2) () Turn Backward, O Time—Kubilius: there's a warmth about this author's writing that freshens stories more familiar than this one.

(2) (2) () No More Pencils, No More Books—Kennedy: reminiscent of Bradbury, without the defects of the model.

(2) (1) () We Shall Com. Back—Liddell: poetic and effective, but not clear enough throughout to rate a 1.

(2) (2) () The Belt—West: despite a gripping story, I still couldn't suspend my disbelief in the scientific basis of the tale.

(2) (2) () Rogue Princess—de Camp: good, but not as good as many others by the same author; not up to the level of his stories in *Future*, for example.

(2) (2) () Intervention—Sherman: fascinating, but should have been longer and more worked out.

(2) (2) () When in Doubt, Mutate—Price: the ending, though clever, didn't quite convince me.

(2) (2) () We, The People—Moore: clever satire, but on the heavy-handed side.

(2) (2) () All The Answers—Phillips: not well written, still I've re-read it twice.

(2) (1) () Scent of Danger—Morrisson & Nix: wonderful situation, but I thought it a bit plot-heavy.

(2) (2) () Escape Valve—Dye: it held me from beginning to end, but didn't seem quite thoroughly thought out.

(2) (2) () Aristotle—Christopher: enjoyable, and with some good points, but somewhat contrived.

(2) (1) () Intermission Time—Jones: perhaps I should have listed the (2) category for stories that were decidedly good, but not quite tops, for one reason or another. I'm not quite sure why I feel this one missed a better rating.

(2) (2) () The Visitors—Liddell: would have rated higher if I hadn't read Blish's superb "Testament of Andros" a short time before.

(2) (2) () Characteristics: Unusual—Garrett: a very good story, without any

LETTERS

particular defects; excellence on a lower level than my standards for (1).

(2) (1) () The Irrationals—Lesser: this needed at least twice the length.

(2) (2) () The Myth-Makers—Walton: powerful, but not quite convincing.

(3) (3) () No War Tomorrow—West: enjoyable, but nothing special as seems to be the usual case with this author; well, there's no disgrace in that.

(3) (3) () Absolutely No Paradox—del Rey: it seems to me that this author has slipped down into the "all right" level too often in recent years.

(3) (3) () Danger Moon—MacCreigh: in the same category as West.

(3) (3) () Seeds of Insecurity—Shaw: this could have been much better; I agree that it was unfortunate that it had to be tried in to the worst cover you've had.

(3) (3) () The Altruist—Klass: enjoyable short stories are the backbone of a magazine that has to come out on time, regardless.

(3) (3) () Fugue—Marlowe: interesting idea, routine handling.

(3) (3) () Fool's Errand—del Rey: another example of the author's downward trend from near-top to moderate excellence.

(3) (3) () Three Worlds in Shadow—Gibson: enjoyable adventure, which, as far as I can see, is all the author is capable of.

(3) (3) () Ordeal on Syrtis—Lesser: very clever tie-in with the article-story that preceded it; don't know how it would have stood otherwise.

(3) (3) () Communicado — MacLean: don't know what I'd have thought of it, had it not run into a gag. Rather tedious, by itself.

(3) (3) () Extra-Secret Agent—Fyfe: author never offends, but seldom stimulates, either.

(3) (3) () The Luckiest Man Alive—Morrison: not new, but okay.

(3) (2) () The Seven Securities—Daly: did not hold up to the opening.

(3) (3) () Goblin Planetoid—Garson: good space-opera.

(3) (3) () Alien Restoration—Dye: ditto.

(3) (2) () The Captive Audience—Shaw: better than "Seeds of Insecurity", but not quite secure of structure.

(3) (3) () The Prowler—Bailey: interesting, but not too fresh.

(3) (3) () Signpost in the Sky—White: cute, but not very well written.

(3) (3) () Horatio, the Creator—Fugate: not science fiction, but enjoyable.

(3) (3) () The Four Commandments—Abernathy: suffered from over-compression.

(3) (3) () Dugal Was A Spaceman—Gibson: another good space-opera.

(3) (3) () Shoo Fly—White: better
[Turn Page]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

handled than the story above, but slight.

(3) (3) () The World She Wanted—Dick: lovely idea, routine treatment.

(3) (3) () She Called Me Frankie—Ottum: cute and slight.

(3) (3) () The Mud Puppy—Bailey: so-so.

(3) (3) () Time Goes to Now—Dye: very good, in a small frame.

(3) (2) () Dreadful Therapy—Walton: good suspense, but I can't buy the author's mysticism.

(3) (3) () Advice From Tomorrow—Reynolds: the gimmick is predictable.

(3) (3) () Halt the Blue Star's Rising—Lesser: good idea, routine story.

(3) (3) () Mercury Bill and the Amorous Hunk—Stearns: very enjoyable, though small-scale humor.

(3) (3) () Curtain in the Sky—Dye: the least good by this author, but still good reading.

(3) (3) () Children of Thon—Cox, Jr.: very well done, but again the ending was predictable.

(3) (3) () The Dry Spell—Fritch: moderately amusing. Suffered from being in the same issue as "A Transmissible Matter".

(3) (3) () The Last Hero—Walton: well, give him an "E" for effort.

(4) (2) () Atomic Bonanza—Smith: not science fiction to me.

(4) (3) () Star Bright—Walton: on the stale side.

(4) (3) () The Sun Came Up Last Night—James: not-up to author's level.

(4) (3) () The Black Alarm—Smith: I enjoyed the G. O. Smith stories you ran in *Future*, but not the ones in *SFQ*.

(4) (3) () Survival of the Fittest—Henderson: old hat.

(4) (3) () Wild Talents, Inc.—Lesser: I'm tired of teleportation stories.

(4) (3) () Defender of the Faith—Coppel: tired of this type, too.

(4) (3) () Last Stand of a Space Grenadier—Grinnell: this sort of thing has been done to death.

(5) (3) () Stopwatch on the World—Gilgannon: didn't belong in a science-fiction magazine.

(5) (4) () Welcome—Coppel: trite.

(5) (4) () The Last Robot—Terzian: likewise.

(5) (3) () Architect of Chaos—Danelaw: boring.

(5) (4) () The Monster or—The Monster—Binder: I'd hoped we'd seen the last of this type of story some ten years ago.

(5) (3) () Reaching For the Moon—Lombino: a waste of space.

Out of 78 stories, a dozen struck me as being outstanding; 18 hit me as being decidedly better than just good; 34 as enjoyable, despite my comments on some of

[Turn To Page 92]



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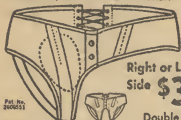
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them; and only 8 I thought were on the poorish side, with 6 editorial errors. That makes a total of 64 on the credit side of the ledger, and 14 debits—a better average than in the first dozen issues of *Future*.

Also on the credit side have been your departments, with the single exception of "The Melting Pot", which struck me as excessively dull. Trimming the edges has certainly helped the appearance of the magazine, and it looks as if your printing—which was atrocious for a couple of issues (February and May 1953)—now seems to be acceptable at worst. And Damon Knight's book reviews have been uniformly readable, and often first class.

The de Camp articles have mostly been to your credit; Sprague makes enjoyable reading, no matter what his subject—but I question the appropriateness of some of the articles of his that you have run. The Blish series was very fine while it lasted, my only complaint being that I wish each one had been longer, and that the series had continued.

Well, here's looking forward to your next dozen issues—and I see it's about time for me to go through the second round with *Future*. Did I hear a groan?

Willis Freeman, Skowhegan, Maine.

Nope, what you heard was a sigh, not a groan—a sigh for the "good old days" when exhaustive breakdowns could be found regularly in the readers' departments, and when (we assume) editors received many more of them than they could publish. What was "good" about the "good old days?"—well, that was, at least to me.

WHY THE OUTCRY?

by Jerry Candler

Dear RWL:

Some people have a great fondness for the old adage, "If the shoe fits . . .", but I have my own version which I think might be useful, too. "If the shoe doesn't fit, why fret about it?" This doubtless weighty flight of philosophy is inspired by Jim Harmon's gripe at Grinnell.

Harmon's contention seems to be that fans invariably behave so and so, and therefore anyone who does not behave according to the idealistic standards he draws up cannot possibly be a fan. The person may read science fiction and love it and make it his true-blue hobby, but by Gawd if he doesn't measure up to the Harmon code, he's no fan!

Well, maybe there's something to that;

[Turn To Page 94]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

maybe the 100% fans have gathered together and codified strict rules and regulations as to who may, and who may not, take unto himself the coveted title—with rites and ritual and symbolic execution for such unfortunates who may have deviated from the line in the past, or who may do so in the future.

Me, I don't know. Of course, I like to think that I'm trustworthy, loyal, brave—well, reasonably so—and so forth; but if I found myself actually face-to-face with a situation such as Grinnell described in "Last Stand of a Space Grenadier" I suspect I might be scared.

So damned scared I might even show some signs of it.

Particularly if I were still an adolescent, under the control of "adults" who I might suspect of not entirely being able to believe or comprehend the matter.

Ah well, this ties it; now I'll never be able to call myself a fan.

—RFD, Rangeley, Maine.

Shh, don't tell anyone, Jerry, but—now that you mention it—I might be somewhat upset, and less than fearless under such circumstances, too!

LET SLEEPING DOGS LIE by Wallace McKinley

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Let's put it this way. I've written letters to you before and you've run some of them. I enjoyed re-reading them in print, seeing your comments, and seeing what other readers had to say too. The prospect of getting an original was more or less enticing, but when I felt like writing I would have written anyway—and when I didn't, or didn't have the time, the originals business did not change anything.

Also I've gotten the feeling that you've run some letters at times simply because you had to get in a basic minimum so that the readers could vote—not because you really felt the letters were worth setting up in type. You had to put something in and just picked out the least objectionable rather than picking out the most interesting.

So my vote is for letting things stand; don't go back to the old practice. If you get enough letters for an interesting department, then run them; if you have only one or two that make good reading, then run just those; if you have none at all, skip the letters. Campbell has, at times, left Brass Tacks out of a specific issue of *As-tounding* and I suspect it wasn't always a case of lack of space; maybe he just didn't have any good letters on hand.

I'd rather see none at all than uninter-

LETTERS

esting comment shoved in just for the sake of having letters in each issue.

—New Canaan, Conn.

As I said before, this is a matter where the readers will have the last say by way of their votes. Since this issue of SFQ has been shoved up in the schedule, and the May number just went on sale as this is being sent off to the printer, I'll postpone decision until the next issue. We'll restore the originals contest for letters if a clear majority of votes are for it, and if I get a minimum of fifty votes on the question. If the minimum number does not arrive, I'll assume that silence means consent to the decision to drop the contest.



THE LOST CONTINENTS OF FICTION

(continued from page 45)

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YOU WILL note that a large proportion of the foregoing novels are of British origin. Now, while the British writers in question command, I think, a higher average level of technical skill in writing than their American colleagues, the American reader may be taken aback by certain features that seem to run through British lost-continent stories with surprising consistency.

For one thing these writers make much use of national stereotypes: thus Germans are almost always professors, while Americans are millionaires, heiresses, or gangsters. American charac-

[Turn Page]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

ters speak a weird mixture of the slang and colloquialisms of all parts of the United States, all periods of its history, and all classes of its people; they begin every third sentence with "I reckon". There are touches of racism and anti-Semitism; and some authors show a pronounced aristocratic bias: They sneer at the "vulgarity" of the "American plutocracy", and their working-class characters are either knaves or fools, incapable of managing their affairs in a civilized manner until an upper-class hero steps in.

In addition to all the foregoing out-and-out novels, which do not pretend to be anything but fiction, there is a group of Atlantis books that would be classed as fiction by most criteria, but whose authors aver them to be factual accounts obtained by occult means. Among these are Clara van Ravn's "Selestor's Men of Atlantis" and Daphne Vigers' "Atlantis Rising". The former purports to have been dictated by an Egyptian "spirit control" with the unlikely name of "Selestor", whereas Miss Vigers claims to have visited Atlantis personally in her astral body. In neither case, however, did these occult operations produce anything worth reading.

Thus the Atlantis theme has been tied to communism, socialism, anti-socialism, Spiritualism, Theosophy, occultism, racism, pacifism, romanticism, diffusionism, Rousseauan primitivism, and Horbigerism. When these tales are taken as a whole, I think that the best entertainment is still provided by those which, like Hyne's "Lost Continent", have no ideological axes to grind but simply tell a lively story in competent, professional style. Which is essentially what Plato did—for which he should be hailed, not as the preserver of arcane ancient traditions of real sunken continents and lost civilizations, but as the first science-fiction writer.





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THE RECKONING

A Report on Your
Votes and Comments

The quantity of returns this time was as gratifying as the promptness and enthusiasm displayed, even if my rating-sheet does show a lot of liability-marks. Scant agreement was shown in what was disliked, every story being detested by somebody; only the last place yarn failed to receive any nominations for championship.

First-timer Gosche stood up very well against the competition of veteran Ray Gallun, and becoming-knower, Morton Klass. The Sioux story actually received more 1st-place votes than any other — but most of the readers who didn't like it best just didn't like it much. The Klass novelet received many jeers and even more cheers — plus frantic requests for a sequel, from over a dozen enthusiasts. Well . . . if the author can turn out a sequel with at least as great an impact as the first story, I'd be willing to consider same. But sequels rarely have such impact, and I assume it can't be done until I'm shown otherwise; usually, it can't.

Here's how you rated our May offering:

1. The Guthrie Method (Gallun)	2.52
2. The Adaptable Ones (Klass)	2.57
3. The Day Doom Came (Gosche)	2.68
4. Small War (Bixby)	3.09
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